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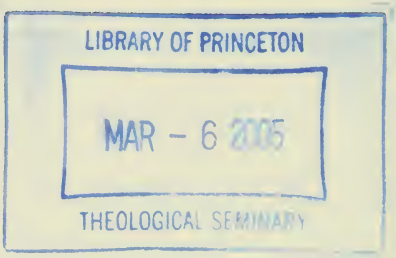

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OF

THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D. & LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,
AND CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF FRANCE.

VOLUME THIRD.

NEW-YORK:
ROBERT CARTER,
58 Canal-street.
1840.

ON THE

MIRACULOUS AND INTERNAL

EVIDENCES

OF THE

CHRISTIAN REVELATION,

AND THE

AUTHORITY OF ITS RECORDS

BY

THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D. & LL.D.

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PREFACE.

It was after some hesitation, that we resolved to place our argument with Hume at the outset of the following work, rather than at the end of it. Men can both understand and be rightly impressed by the objects of belief, long before the metaphysics of belief are either understood or attended to; and it might therefore have seemed better to enter immediately on the evidence from human testimony for the miracles of the Gospel, previous to our entertainment of the question whether it was competent for such testimony to establish the truth of a miracle.

But we decided for the arrangement as it now stands, on the consideration, that this alleged insusceptibility of a proof is every where, throughout the celebrated essay of Mr. Hume, regarded and reasoned upon as if it were a bar in the way of all further or detailed examination of it—just as the preliminary objection to a witness upon a trial, if not previously judged of and pronounced upon, is held fatal to the reception of his evidence. We have therefore introduced our discussion of this

controversy into the first Book—though in violation of what in some respects we deem to be the natural order; and subjecting our readers to the disadvantage of a more obscure and difficult passage at the commencement, than they will meet with any where else along the course of the two following volumes.

We hope that the reader will, even in this preliminary argument, find the observation to be verified which is so often realized in other departments of the evidence of Christianity. It has frequently happened in the course of the deistical controversy, that the enemies of the Gospel have in the first instance, by the peculiar character of their objections, challenged its friends to a walk of investigation which had not been previously entered on—in the prosecution of which walk they achieved a great deal more than simply neutralize the objection which first provoked them to the conflict; but, as if by its overthrow they had opened a new mine of evidence, have raised a positive and additional proof for the truth of Christianity. This we expect to show, particularly in our third book on the internal evidences of Christianity. The alleged inconsistencies of the New Testament with itself have not only been cleared up by the lucubrations of critics and defenders; but a constantly increasing number of recondite harmonies has been discovered which, in the masterly hands

of Dr. Paley, has been converted into an irresistible argument on the side of the faith. The same has been the result of the contradictions that were affirmed by our adversaries, to obtain between the informations of the New Testament and of profane or Jewish authors—the objection, not only put to flight, but transmuted into a strong affirmative argument; and now left in full possession of the field through the labours of Lardner and Blunt and others, who have pointed out a number of minute and marvellous coincidences between the narratives of our sacred writers and those of contemporary authors. The same is the result we are persuaded of the objection made by adversaries, on the ground of the discrepancies that are said to obtain between the Gospel and human nature—whereas, in the felt adaptations of the one to the other, there is a vast amount, as we shall endeavour to make manifest in the next volume, of most effective evidence in favour of the christian religion.

We are not without hope that the intelligent reader will be able to reap the same fruit from the sceptical reasonings of Mr. Hume. If the argumentation which we have employed against him be at all valid, the just conclusion is not merely that there is an evidence on the side of Christianity, as much superior to the greater improbability of its extraordinary facts, as the best

evidence which has descended to us from ancient times is superior to the small improbability of the facts in ordinary history—but that, in truth, after full deduction has been made for the incredibility of miracles, there remains an overpassing superiority of evidence in their favour above all that can possibly be claimed for the best attested histories which have been transmitted to the present day, in any other records of past ages. Christianity on this ground too, as on many others, has we think not only won for herself the safety of a defence; but has been enriched by the spoils of a victory.

If in the first Book of this work, we have chiefly to do with the miraculous argument in the abstract; we pass in the second to that argument in the concrete, or consider the actual evidence for the miracles of the gospel. Even in this department it will be found to be more a work of principles than of details; and there are few of its lessons which we should, in opposition to a prevalent bias, so like adequately to impress on the understanding of the reader—as the inherently greater strength of evidence given by the scriptural than by the exscriptural, or by the original than the subsequent witnesses for the truth of the evangelical history; and also the far superior value of the christian to the heathen testimonies.

Although we have assigned to the third Book, which commences the second volume of this work,

our considerations and views on the internal evidence of Christianity—we are abundantly sensible of the difficulty which there is, in tracing the precise line of demarcation between this and the external evidence. If the one consist in those marks of credibility which we observe when looking to the witnesses of the message—the other may be regarded as consisting in those marks of credibility which we observe when looking to its contents or its subject-matter. It is with this last that the third Book is chiefly conversant, with the self-evidencing power of the Bible—the chief ingredient of which, as being far the most effectual in the work of Christianization or conversion, has been denominated the manifestation of the truth unto the conscience; or, otherwise, the experimental evidence for the truth of Christianity. We shall endeavour to make palpable the distinction between this most solid of all the evidences, and a certain other internal evidence which we have long regarded as of a spurious or at least a very questionable character.

The fourth and last Book is taken up, in great part at least, with what may be termed the *bibliography* of scripture—the evidence on which its various pieces have been admitted into the *canon*, so as to form constituent parts of our present Bible; and the security we have for the general correctness of the present readings in the received original

scriptures, as well as of the renderings in the various popular versions of Christendom; or, in other words, our security both for the state of the text and for the truth of its generally received interpretations. This argument has given rise to distinct chapters on the respective functions of scripture criticism and systematic theology. But over and above we have thought it right to discuss both the evidence and the degree of that *inspiration*, by which we hold the sacred Volume to be distinguished from all other writings—a topic of incalculable importance, and which prepares the way for our concluding chapter on the supreme authority of revelation. It will be perceived, in this department of the work, how closely the two questions of the canon of scripture and its inspiration are related to each other.

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BOOK I.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

On the Cognizance which the Understanding takes of its own Processes.

1. It has often been said of man that he is the greatest of all mysteries to himself. What hath led to this saying is his profound ignorance of that which is so immediately about him as his own sentient and moral and intellectual economy. It is strange that to him the most deep and difficult secrets are those which lie nearest to him. Yet so it is—and however inscrutable he may find Nature to be in all her departments, yet never does he find her more so than among the recesses of his own internal system, and amid the hidden workings of his own nature.

2. But it is of the utmost practical importance to remark that though man knows not the processes of that complex economy by which it is that he moves and feels and thinks, it is not necessary that he should, in order either to move aright, or to feel aright, or even to think aright. In as far as the merely animal constitution is concerned, this is

quite palpable. That the processes of this constitution should go rightly forward it is not necessary that he should understand them. He does not need to study anatomy that he might find his way to the appropriate muscles by which to move and turn himself. It is not by any intelligent guidance of his that the processes of digestion and secretion and circulation are regulated. The creature may be upheld in living play and in the healthful enjoyment of life, although he should never have taken lessons on Physiology, or speculated till he had lost his way among the arcana of vitality and the vital principle. That the machinery of his own internal system may be kept prosperously a-going it is no more required that he should look inwardly, than that he should look outwardly or upwardly to the Heavens lest the mechanism of the Planetary system should go into unhingement. The systems both of Astronomy and Anatomy are independent of him—and though both lay hid in unrevealed mystery for ages, yet did the one proceed as invariably and the other almost so, as *now* that they have been somewhat opened to the gaze of his curiosity. A thing may operate rightly though he knows nothing of the *modus operandi*. To have the full use of his animal system he is nearly as independent of the science of it, as any inferior creature who is incapable of science—and who nevertheless in the freshness and buoyancy of its own spontaneous powers can expatiate at large in the element that is suited to it; and either revel in fields of air, or sport itself in the waters of the sea, or luxuriate on the pastures of earth—and all

by the adaptations of a self-mechanism, of the workings of which, nay even of the existence of which it is wholly unconscious.

3. All this is abundantly obvious—but it has not been sufficiently attended to, that the remark is nearly as applicable to man's moral as to his animal constitution. That this constitution be in a wholesome state, or that its various faculties and functions should be in right adjustment, it is not necessary for man the owner of this constitution to take a reflex view of it, or become theoretically acquainted with the nature and the workings of this inner mechanism. What has been said of physical may be as emphatically said of moral and spiritual health. The vigorous clown may have all the use or enjoyment of it—while all the science of it belongs to the sickly valetudinarian. And in like manner the first may never have heard of a moral sense, and yet both promptly discern and powerfully feel the obligations of morality—while the second can subtly analyze that conscience, whose authority he bids away from him. The truth is, that often when man is most alive to the sense of what is duteous and incumbent, it is not to himself that he looks—but to a fellow man whether an applicant for justice or charity who at the time is present to his sight, or to God the sovereign claimant of piety and of all righteousness, who at the time is present to his thoughts. So that all the while he may have been looking outwardly to an object, and never once have cast an introverted view upon himself the subject. He may have been looking objectively or forth of himself, and never subjectively or towards himself.

He may have taken in a right sensibility from the object that is without him, and have been practically urged thereby in a right direction. There has been a real inward process in consequence—but the process has only been described or undergone; it has not been attended to. The organ whether of feeling or of perception may be justly impressed with the object that is addressed to it—while the man is wholly taken up with the object; and meanwhile all consciousness of the organ is suspended. It is precisely like the man who can see rightly that which is before him, although he should never think of the eye's retina nor be aware of its existence. Notwithstanding his well-conditioned moral state he may be as ignorant of the moral, as many a peasant in a well-conditioned physical state is ignorant of the physical anatomy. In the construction of our ethical systems, this distinction has not been enough adverted to—between a knowledge of the objects of the science, and a knowledge of the faculty by which these objects are perceived or judged of. Certain it is, that without the latter knowledge there may, practically, be a most correct intelligence and feeling in regard to the question of right and wrong—nay the principles of this question may be philosophically arranged, and a complete moral philosophy be framed without that peculiar analysis which is resorted to by those who blend the moral with the mental philosophy.

4. But the same is also true of our intellectual constitution. It may be in a sound state and may operate soundly—though we should never have bestowed one thought upon it. That the under-

standing may proceed aright on the many thousand objects of human thought, it is not necessary that it should take any cognizance of its own processes. We admit that the procedure of the human understanding forms one, and that too a most interesting topic of inquiry. But it is not necessary to have mastered this topic, ere we are qualified to enter on other topics of inquiry. The truth is, that a man may have put forth his understanding with wisdom and with a warrantable confidence on every other department of human knowledge—and yet be a stranger to that one department, the knowledge of his own intellectual processes. In a word the understanding may understand every thing but itself —we mean every thing that is within the circle of our mental acquisitions. We may work well with an instrument, though we do not attend to the workings of the instrument. We do not first look to the instrument of thought, and then to the objects of thought—or first to that which understands, and then to that which is to be understood. We investigate without one thought of the investigating mind—just as to ascertain the visible properties of that which is before it, the eye, instead of looking to itself, looks openly and directly forth of itself, and on the outer field of contemplation.

5. There are many who exercise their intellectual powers vigorously and soundly, without ever once casting an introverted eye on their mode of operation—who, in contact only with the objects of reasoning, never once bestow a formal or express thought on the act of reasoning, yet reason conclusively and well—who, busied with nothing

else for example but lines and angles and surfaces, can prosecute a most logical and unexceptionable train of argumentation, yet have never made of logic a science or a study—who can travel the whole round of our existing mathematics, without one thought of that mind which performs every footstep, or the working of that machinery within to which they are indebted for every inch of their progress. It is all the while with something apart from the understanding that the thinking principle is engaged, and not with the understanding itself—and while there are many who, to magnify their own office, will tell of the science of mind that it is the parent of all other sciences; and which therefore occupy a place that is posterior and subordinate—we feel it to be certain that Newton might have done all that he has achieved in geometry, that he might have made the same skilful applications of it to the physics and philosophy of the material universe, that he might have unravelled the mazy heavens and moved with gigantic footstep from one wondrous discovery to another, without one reflex thought on the operations of that faculty within his breast, which yet was the instrument of all his triumphs. He did not first medicate his understanding by the prescriptions of logic, and then go forth with it on the theatre of its exercise. But he went forth with it in all the vigour of its immediate and original health, and fastened it at once on the objects of physical investigation. Even the three Laws of Nature by which he introduces the Principia to his reader, he gathered, not from the field of his internal, but from

that of his external contemplations. They are not laws of mind, but laws which have their jurisdiction in surrounding space—and it is by looking intelligently there, and not by looking to itself that the mind is enabled to recognise them.

6. On this subject we hold Dr. Brown to have overrated the importance of the mental philosophy —both when he says that a right view of the science of mind is essential to every other science —and when he says that "to the philosophy of mind, every speculation in every science may be said to have relation as a common centre." A certain given effect may be found to depend on a particular thing, and yet may not at all depend on our *knowledge* of the thing. He seems to have confounded these two—and to have ascribed that to our knowledge of a thing which was only due to the thing itself. It is true that the actual results in every science depend not merely on the nature of the objects investigated, but on the nature of the investigating mind—and that with minds differently constituted, or having other powers and perceptions than those which do in fact belong to us, all our sciences would be affected with a corresponding difference. A differently constituted mental system in our species, would have made all our sciences different from those which make up our existing philosophy—but that is not to say, that we must first study the actual construction of our minds, ere we can enter on the study of the actual sciences. Science as it is, may be regarded as the compound effects of two ingredients—of mind as it is, and of that which the mind investigates even

the subject-matter of the science. Change one of these ingredients even the mind—and this will give rise to the new compound of a science different and differently modified. But it does not follow that because all science thus depends on the nature of that ingredient, it therefore depends on our knowledge of that ingredient. It is most true that as the mind is, so effectively the science is. But we bring about the effect simply by using the mind, although we should not have studied it. The philosopher goes forth upon nature with such a mind, as he finds himself to have—and the result is a science in the state we now actually behold it. Had he found himself with a different mind, he would still have gone forth upon nature; and the result would have been a science different from the present one. But in neither case does he look reflexly upon the mind, nor is it necessary that he should. It is no doubt the instrument of all his discoveries—but mental though it be, it is no more essential to his sound and effective working of it that he should become acquainted with the laws of mind, than it is essential for an artisan in order that he might work his instrument rightly to become acquainted with the laws of matter. Had our minds been constituted otherwise than they are, we should have had a different mental physiology—and corresponding to this, a different set of the sciences. The working of our mental physiology is indispensable to our acquisition of all the sciences; but the knowledge of our mental physiology is not indispensable to the acquisition of any of the sciences, save of the science of mind alone.

7. The mind, in the work of investigating any object beside itself, employs the laws of thought —just as the mechanic in working with his tools employs the laws of matter. But it is not necessary in either case that the laws, whether of matter or of mind, should have been previously investigated by the operator himself. The resulting view or the resulting feeling of the mind's attention to any object, apart from itself, is the composed effect of what the mind is and of what the object is—so that if the constitution of the mind were altered, the view or the feeling would also be altered. What the mind is, is therefore indispensable to the result, but not our knowledge of what the mind is; and therefore though in direct contradiction to Dr. Brown we hold "that every branch of the physics of mere matter could be cultivated to its highest degree of accuracy and perfection, without our ever having reflected on the nature of that intellectual medium through which alone the phenomena of matter become visible to us."*

* The following extracts from Brown's second lecture contain the most of what we hold to be exceptionable in his views upon this subject. :—

"It was to show what is of much more importance,—how essential a right view of the science of mind is to every other science, even to those sciences which superficial thinkers might conceive to have no connexion with it; and how vain it would be to expect, that any branch of the physics of mere matter could be cultivated to its highest degree of accuracy and perfection, without a due acquaintance with the nature of that intellectual medium, through which alone the phenomena of matter become visible to us, and of those intellectual instruments, by which the objects of every science, and of every science alike, are measured and divided, and arranged. We might almost as well expect to form an accurate judgment, as to the figure, and distance, and colour of an object, at which we look through an optical glass,

8. The analogy which he institutes between the mind and a telescope, viewed as instruments of observation, will not make good his argument. He tells us that to expect an acquaintance with external things without acquaintance with the natural medium of the intellect—were as vain as to expect that we should form an accurate judg-

without paying any regard to the colour and refracting power of the lens itself. The distinction of the sciences and arts, in the sense in which these words are commonly understood, is as just as it is familiar; but it may be truly said, that, in relation to our power of discovery, science is itself an art, or the result of an art. Whether, in this most beautiful of processes, we regard the mind as the instrument or the artist, it is equally that by which all the wonders of speculative, or practical knowledge, are evolved. It is an agent operating in the production of new results, and employing for this purpose the known laws of thought, in the same manner as, on other occasions, it employs the known laws of matter. The objects, to which it may apply itself, are indeed various, and, as such, give to the sciences their different names. But, though the objects vary, the observer and the instrument are continually the same. The limits of the powers of this mental instrument, are not the limits of its powers alone; they are also the only real limits, within which every science is comprehended. To the extent which it allows, all those sciences, physical or mathematical, and all the arts which depend on them, may be improved; but beyond this point, it would be vain to expect them to pass; or rather to speak more accurately, the very supposition of any progress beyond this point would imply the grossest absurdity; since human science can be nothing more than the result of the direction of human faculties to particular objects. To the astronomer, the faculty by which he calculates the disturbing forces that operate on a satellite of Jupiter, in its revolution round the primary planet, is as much an instrument of his art, as the telescope by which he distinguishes that almost invisible orb; and it is as important, and surely as interesting, to know the real power of the intellectual instrument, which he uses, not for calculations of this kind only, but for all the speculative and moral purposes of life, as it can be to know the exact power of that subordinate instrument, which he uses only for his occasional survey of the heavens.

"To the philosophy of mind then, every speculation in every science may be said to have relation as to a common centre."

ment as to the figure and distance and colour of an object at which we look through the artificial medium of an optical glass, without paying any regard to the colour and refractory power of the medium itself—and that, "to the astronomer the faculty by which he calculates the disturbing forces that operate on a satellite of Jupiter, in its revolutions round its primary planet, is as much an instrument of his art as the telescope by which he distinguishes that almost invisible orb; and it is as important and surely as interesting to know the real power of the intellectual instrument which he uses, not for calculations of this kind only, but for all the speculative and moral purposes of life, as it can be to know the exact power of that subordinate instrument, which he uses only for his occasional survey of the heavens." Now our design in the examination of an optical glass previous to the use of it, is to compare its intimations with those of the eye, that we might reduce both to the same standard. But a like scientific examination of the eye is not at all called for—we having already arrived at the confident use of it by the education of the senses, or that busy interchange and comparison of notices between the sight and the touch, during which, from early infancy, the mind has all along felt that it was holding converse not with itself but with the external world. The confidence wherewith we use the natural instruments, whether of the eye or of the mind, is the fruit of a gross and general experience; and no reflex or introverted view which the mind can now take of its own operations will add to that confidence. And after that

either by our own science or the report of scientific men, we have obtained confidence in the use of an optical glass, we look no longer *to* it—but *through* it, and *to* the object on which object it is that our attention terminates and rests. And after that by the tuition of nature under which the homeliest peasant has risen to as great a proficiency as ourselves, we have acquired the confident use of our senses, we look neither *to* them nor *to* the mind, but *from* the mind and *on* the object of contemplation.

9. Although to the physiology of the mind belong all those powers and processes, by which it is that it acquires the knowledge of things which are separate from itself, and therefore the working of this physiology is anterior to the acquirement of all knowledge—yet the knowledge of this physiology is not so anterior. The physiology may be at work, soundly and successfully at work, without being at all understood or even adverted to—just as a man may operate rightly and fulfil the whole practical object of some piece of machinery that has been put into his hands, although he understands not the construction of it. The mental physiology in regard to its being must have the historical precedency over all science—but the science of this physiology has no such historical precedency over all other science. Suppose, that, instead of access by consciousness to the mechanism of my own intellect, I had access by some new channel of observation to the mechanism of the intellect of another man, and that I saw him busily and prosperously engaged in the study or contemplation of some one department of external nature

—it is by looking to him certainly, that I should extend my knowledge of the world of spirit—but it would be by looking to the very same place on which his regards are fastened, that I should extend my knowledge of the world of sense. For this latter purpose, I would just as little look towards him, as he is doing himself, at the moment when his attention is intently fastened on some outer field of contemplation. To obtain the accurate perception of a tree, I should not look to the faint and perhaps muddy reflection of it, from the waters of that lake on whose margin it is standing—and neither should I look to the mind of another, nor yet to my own mind, that from the mental reflection which is exhibited there, I might learn of that material world which stands in its own direct revelation before me.

10. It has been affirmed in plea for the priority of the study of mind over all other studies, that it is only by means of just conceptions in regard to the powers and the province of the human intellect, that certain illusions have been dissipated which were not merely unphilosophical in themselves, but which, so long as they lasted and had currency in the world, did effectually baffle the progress of all philosophy. But we, I contend, who now are in a state of freedom from these illusions, have no call upon us for attending to the process by which they were destroyed. The ingenious sophistries of Hume led to the conclusion that the material world had no existence but in our own shadowy imaginations. But is that a reason why, ere I enter on the Natural Philosophy by which the laws of matter are

investigated, I who have no doubt upon the subject, must first be satisfied of the superior force of that reasoning by which the sophistries of Hume have been overthrown? I am not at all troubled with those sensible species which schoolmen chose to interpose between the human mind and those external realities by which it is encompassed—and am I therefore to be troubled ere I can clear my way to an immediate converse with these realities, with those masterly demonstrations of a sounder and better intellectual Philosophy, by which all the species and spectres of the middle ages have at length been put to flight? Because there are men in all ages, who have wandered from the direct path of simplicity and common sense in pursuit of some laborious follies of their own, can I who do not share in these follies only find access to that path across the still more laborious Philosophy which has now extinguished them for ever? The elaborate perversities of the human mind may require the elaboration equally severe of some great master-spirit to overturn them. But now that these perversities have gone into oblivion, and the temporary purpose of their utter destruction has been accomplished—is it for us to leave the obvious and rectilineal path which Nature has marked out, in pursuit of every wild deviation, or even of the retracing path by which the wanderers have been called back again. We utterly refuse the right of human folly in past generations to lay such a tax upon posterity—and though aware that a whole millennium of thickest intellectual darkness passed over the world, and that it was only dispersed by the philosophy of Bacon—

yet now that he has set us on the right path of investigation, in that path we may go, alike unconscious of those false lights by which our ancestors were bewildered, or of that greater light which put out them all. The confidence of Nature was disturbed by the reveries of the schoolmen. But now that these reveries are dissipated the confidence is restored.—And without once having looked on the Novum Organum of Bacon, there is not a human creature in the maturity of his ordinary understanding, who does not know his great and simple lesson, and only great because of the monstrous absurdities by which for ages it was wholly overborne—even that to ascertain the visible qualities of an object we must look, or its sonorous qualities we must listen, or its tangible qualities we must handle, or its dimensions we must measure.*

11. There is no doubt that the view which we are led to take on every one subject of human knowledge is dependent on the physiology of the mind. But that is not to say that we must therefore become first acquainted with this physiology, ere we set ourselves to the acquirement of all other knowledge. There can be no doubt that because such is the constitution of the mind, such therefore

* Dugald Stewart says in Vol. II. p. 36, 37 of his Philosophy of the Moral and Intellectual Powers—"The science of abstruse learning, I consider in the same light with the ingenious writer, who compares it to Achilles' spear that healed the wounds that it made before. It serves to repair the damage itself had occasioned, and this perhaps is all it is good for. It casts no additional light upon the paths of life; but disperses the clouds with which it had overspread them before. It advances not the traveller one step on his journey, but conducts him back again to the spot from which he wandered.

are its modes of reasoning and of judging on all the objects of possible contemplation. But it does not on that account follow, that we must first study this constitution ere we proceed to the study of any thing else. The powers of the mind are antecedent to the acquirements of the mind. But the knowledge of those powers by which the acquirements are gotten is not antecedent to that knowledge in which the acquirements consist. The mind is the instrument of all its own acquisitions—but the instrument has been long tried and used and has also accomplished a great deal of work, before its properties have become the objects of our separate investigation. It is true that without a retina and without a picture of that which is external being spread out there, there could have been no science of optics. But it is just as true that it would have been as clear and demonstrative a science as it is at this moment, though anatomists had never found their way to this phenomenon, and the very first touch of their dissecting instrument had so injured the whole of the visual apparatus as to have made the exhibition impossible. And in like manner, there is a certainty and an evidence in many of the sciences that is altogether unaffected either by the success or the failure of our speculations on the mental physiology. When I look to the lines and the angles of Geometry, it is not to the diagram upon my retina, but to the diagram upon the paper or upon the board—and in like manner when I prosecute the train of its clear and resistless argumentations, I look only to the evidence that beams upon me from the subject itself,

and not to the mind which has been so constructed as to be the recipient of that evidence. It is thus that physical science may, up to its proudest altitudes, have become the mental acquirement of him who has never once cast a regard on the mental physiology—and we should be doing what is preposterous, we should be inverting the experimental order of things, did we insist that the scholar should have a clear insight into the machinery of his intellectual powers, ere we asked him to set that machinery a-going, or by a busy forth-putting of these powers to attain a clear insight upon the other departments of human contemplation.

12. Men judged well and reasoned well on a thousand objects of contemplation, long before the mental acts of judging and reasoning became the objects of contemplation themselves. When these in their turn became the distinct objects of thought, they underwent the same treatment as all the other objects of thought do when treated philosophically —that is, they were grouped and classified according to their resemblances into the various modes of ratiocination. Still the soundness of all the different reasonings was felt, long before that Logic*

* But we must here warn the reader against the error of confounding, in whole or in part, the sciences either of logic or of ethics with the science of the mental physiology. It is true, that one might reason well on any specific object of thought, anterior to the study of logic. But it is as true, that one might study and acquire logic, anterior to and apart from his study of the mental physiology. The acts of reasoning and judging, viewed as mental acts or phenomena, are objects of the latter science; but these form the objects of an inquiry altogether different from the question that respects the goodness of the reasonings or of the judgments—a question which it is the office of logic to decide.

had pronounced upon it. It was not logic that first authorized the reasonings—but logic went forth, as it were, on the previous confident reasonings of men, just as the philosophic inquirer goes forth among those phenomena which constitute the materials of a science, and groupes or arranges them according to their common observed qualities. We dispute not the use of logic—for the study of it implies, first attention to the actual specimens or examples of valid argumentation—and then a recognition by the mind of what that is which constitutes its validity—and we cannot well be so engaged without becoming more expert both in the practice of reasoning and in the detection of any flaw or infirmity in the process. All we affirm is, that good and bad reasoning were felt to be such, before that any reflex cognizance was taken of them. It is not by an antecedent prescription of logic that men defer to the authority of proofs—but it is out of antecedently felt and recognised proofs that the prescriptions of logic are framed. It was not necessary first to devise a right system of logic, that from it men might learn to reason conclusively and well—but this system is constructed upon an after survey of those good and conclusive reasonings, which, anterior to its guidance, had come forth on the field of human observation. The completion of a right system of logic is therefore not indispensable to the practice of sound reasoning, either in the business of life or in the sciences—neither does it follow that an erroneous system would materially hinder the work of prosperous investigation, in any quarter to which the intel-

lect of man might betake itself. The class of the logicians might differ among themselves; or collectively they might fail in adjusting and building up a sound theory out of those existing materials, which, in the shape of sound judgments and sound reasonings, have been produced or are being produced every day by every other class of inquirers. So that apart from logic, and even in the midst of confusion and contrariety amongst the masters in the science, the general mind of society might be proceeding rightly onward, and multiplying the known truths of all the other sciences; and that whether they are truths which lie at a great depth and are fetched upward as it were by an act of shrewd intuition, or lie at a great distance and are reached forward by a consecutive train of argument. Each process may be most correctly done by the immediate agent, whether or not it be correctly described by the logician who is looking over him.

13. It should be remarked however that even in the study of universal Logic, the mind is not at all times studying itself. It is not necessarily looking inwards, when attending either to the modes or to the principles of reasoning. It, for example, lays confident hold on the truth of the axiom that every event must have a cause; or, proceeding on the constancy of nature, that a like result is always to be anticipated in like circumstances—and in so doing it may be looking objectively and not subjectively. We are not to confound the act of the mind in judging with the thing that the mind judges of. It is a mistake that the science of mental

physiology envelopes, as it were, the sciences of Logic and Ethics. The science of the mental physiology takes cognizance of the various states of the mind as phenomena, and groupes them into laws or classes according to their observed resemblances. But this is a different employment from that of estimating either what is sound in morals or sound in reasoning. The question, what are the states of emotion or the intellectual states whereof the mind is susceptible, is another question altogether from what that is which constitutes the right and wrong in character, or what that is which constitutes the right and wrong in argument. Mental physiology has been too much blended with the sciences of Ethics and Logic, so as to be regarded in some degree as identical studies. They are not so. It is only when the first principles whether of Logic or of Ethics are controverted, that we are thrown back as it were on our own minds, to take a view there, of what the laws are, whether of human feeling or of human thought. When there is a denial of first principles, this is the only way left to us, of meeting either the moral or the intellectual scepticism. We have no other resource than simply to state the mind's original and instinctive and withal resistless tendencies, whether in matters of belief or in matters of sentiment. It is at this part only of a logical or ethical discussion, that the constitution of the mind comes into notice as a direct object of contemplation. There is a certain obstinate scepticism which cannot be reasoned against, and which can be contravened in no other way, than by an affirmation of the mind's instinctive

confidence in those principles which constitute both the basis and the cement of all reasoning.

14. It is of importance to remark how confidently, and withal how correctly these first principles of belief were proceeded on, ere they were adverted to as parts of the mind's constitution. The phenomena of belief are antecedent to any notice or knowledge on our part of the laws or the principles of belief. Men achieved the intellectual process legitimately, ere the legitimacy of the process was traced or recognised. From the beginning of the world man's faith in the constancy of nature was as vigorously in operation as now—and, for many ages before that it was announced as one of the instincts of the human understanding, did it serve for man's practical guidance both in the business of life, and in the prosecution of all the sciences. And what is true of the infancy of the species is also true of the infancy of each individual. It is with his rational as with his animal economy. Each goeth on prosperously and well, without any reflex view of the operations of either. It would appear that from the very outset of the education of the senses, there are certain original principles of belief which are in most efficient play; and the practical result of it is the infant's sound education. The following are the admirable observations of Dr. Thomas Brown on the habitudes and powers of the little reasoner —and we bring them forward that we may discriminate more clearly between a mental process as done by one individual, and the same process as described by another individual who is looking over

him. After having analyzed the process of an infant's mind, he says—"I am aware that the application to an infant, of a process of reasoning expressed in terms of such grave and formal philosophic nomenclature, has some chance of appearing ridiculous. But the reasoning itself is very different from the terms employed to express it, and is truly as simple and natural as the terms, which our language obliges us to employ in expressing it, are abstract and artificial. The infant however, in his feeling of the similarity of antecedents and consequents, and of the necessity therefore of a new antecedent, where the consequent is different has the reasoning but not the terms. He does not form the proposition as universal and applicable to cases that have not yet existed; but he feels it in every particular case as it occurs. That he does truly reason with at least as much subtilty as is involved in the process now supposed, cannot be doubted by those who attend to the manifest results of his little inductions, in those acquisitions of knowledge which show themselves in the actions, and I may say almost in the very looks of the little reasoner—at a period long before that to which his own remembrance is afterwards to extend, when, in the maturer progress of his intellectual powers, the darkness of eternity will meet his eye alike, whether he attempts to gaze on the past or on the future; and the wish to know the events with which he is afterwards to be occupied and interested, will not be more unavailing than the wish to retrace events that were the occupation and interest of the most important years of his existence."—"Even

then many a process of ratiocination is going on, which might have served as an example of strict logic to Aristotle himself; and which affords results far more valuable to the individual reasoner, than all the contents of all the folios of the crowd of that great logician's scholastic commentators."

15. Whatever then may be involved in the formation of a right system of logic—whether the logician for this purpose should have to classify the processes of reasoning, or to be studiously observant of the mental phenomena, that is to say, whether he should have to look objectively or subjectively, it is conceivable of his peculiar work that it may be done either well or ill, and the work of all other inquirers in all the other departments of human thought may go on vigorously and prosperously, notwithstanding. One man may work a machine well, though another should altogether fail in the description of it—and this just holds as true of a reasoning piece of mechanism as of any other. The phenomena of belief, and of sound belief, as existing in the mind of one man, may have been incorrectly surveyed and stated by another acting in the capacity of his inspector—but that does not hinder, either the belief from being legitimate in itself, or from its having been arrived at legitimately. We should not insist at such length on a matter that seems so very obvious, did we not foresee the importance of a certain application to topics of Christian evidence that we shall have occasion to make of it. The direct work of the understanding both in Christianity and in the other branches of human

investigation may be going on rightly, while that work may be very far from being either discerned rightly or described rightly. The understanding may understand other things, and yet not understand itself. Its business may be well done, yet ill described. And while wholesome processes of inference, leading to wholesome and most valuable conclusions, are actually going on in every other department; it is conceivable that the logician, baffled in the work of his department, may have found it impracticable to make a thorough exposition of them.

16. And there are many respects, in which a direct process of the understanding admits not of being closely or completely followed up, by any reflex cognizance that might afterwards be taken of it. We know, for example, that there are degrees of evidence, and degrees of weaker or stronger belief corresponding thereunto. There is a sort of general proportion between the evidence for a thing and the impression of its credibility. Yet who can take account of these impressions? Who can take an accurate measure of their intensity? Who can construct a relative scale, by which the degrees of proof and the degrees of conviction shall be placed in right correspondence together —and then tell in every instance, whether the inquirer's confidence is in just proportion to the evidence that has been presented to him? Yet practically and really the confidence will grow with the evidence, and may be in right proportion thereunto, though any statement of the degree or the proportion be utterly impossible. A man of rightly

constituted understanding may judge rightly in every instance; while, in no one instance, might any man, though endowed with the most subtle or powerful understanding upon earth, be able to assign numerically how strong the judgment ought to be, in the given proofs or likelihoods of that particular question which the mind may happen to entertain. A peasant for example, of sound intellect, may give to a certain story the very degree of credit which rightfully belongs to it. The appearances of its truth, the seeming honesty of the witness, the whole turn and style of his relation, the internal and circumstantial evidence which it possesses—all these may have made their impression and their just impression upon him. Other witnesses may be conceived to superadd their testimony—and the conviction may be strengthened, and strengthened in the fair and right proportion too, with every accession to the evidence. He, sitting in the direct capacity of a judge in the narrative, may be rightly impressed with all that is brought into the field of his notice —and in the rate of his conviction, he may be keeping an equal pace with the evidence as it grows and multiplies around him. But another acting in the capacity of an inspector over him, whether as a logician or a mental physiologist, may be utterly unable to estimate what the intensity of his belief is, or whether it accurately corresponds to the degree of probability that lies in the existing evidence. In other words the direct process may be going on rightly, while a full reflex cognizance thereof may be utterly impossible. It

goes on rightly with the child at the outset of his natural education—although it be impossible to trace it metaphysically. It goes on rightly with the unlettered workman—and the results of it are neither less true and important in themselves, nor less valuable to him; although in this case both a metaphysical description of the process, and a logical estimate of the proof had been alike impossible.

17. Were these principles rightly appreciated, it would serve to qualify and we indeed think to do away the contempt which is often felt and expressed for the popular understanding.* When it is

*"It has been frequently remarked, that the justest and most efficient understandings are often possessed by men who are incapable of stating to others, or even to themselves, the grounds on which they proceed in forming their decisions. In some instances, I have been disposed to ascribe this to the faults of early education; but, in other cases, I am persuaded, that it was the effect of active and imperious habits in quickening the evanescent processes of thought, so as to render them untraceable by the memory; and to give the appearance of *intuition* to what was in fact the result of a train of reasoning so rapid as to escape notice. This I conceive to be the true theory of what is generally called *common sense*, in opposition to book-learning; and it serves to account for the use which has been made of this phrase, by various writers, as synonymous with intuition.

"These seemingly instantaneous judgments have always appeared to me as entitled to a greater share of our confidence than many of our more deliberate conclusions; inasmuch as they have been forced as it were, on the mind by the lessons of long experience; and are as little liable to be biassed by temper or passion, as the estimates we form of the distances of visible objects. They constitute, indeed, to those who are habitually engaged in the busy scenes of life, a sort of peculiar *faculty*, analogous, both in its origin and in its use, to the *coup d'œil* of the military engineer, or to the quick and sure tact of the medical practitioner, in marking the diagnostics of disease."

"An anecdote which I heard, many years ago, of a late very eminent Judge (Lord Mansfield) has often recurred to my memory, while reflecting on these apparent inconsistencies of

said of the common people that they are not logicians, this may be true if it be meant, that they seldom take a reflex view of the processes of intellect, and are strangers to the terms of that nomenclature by which these processes are described. But that is not to hinder their going most correctly and intelligently through the processes themselves. Though incapable of the reflex, they may be abundantly capable of the direct process—and on a thousand subjects calling forth the exercise of mind, but which are apart from the subject of mind itself, they do evince a shrewdness and penetration for which too little credit is given to them. Generally speaking, an unlettered workman knows nothing of the philosophy of testimony—yet without this knowledge he may be accurately impressed by the importance of any actual or specific testimony which is brought within his reach. On the strength of those instinctive principles of belief which are in busy operation within him, though he himself hath never taken account of them; and on the strength of his general and accumulated experience—he

intellectual character. A friend of his, who possessed excellent natural talents, but who had been prevented, by his professional duties as a naval officer, from bestowing on them all the cultivation of which they were susceptible, having been recently appointed to the government of Jamaica, happened to express some doubts of his competency to preside in the Court of Chancery. Lord Mansfield assured him, that he would find the difficulty not so great as he apprehended. 'Trust,' he said, 'to your own good sense in forming your opinions; but beware of attempting to state the grounds of your judgments. The judgment will probably be right;—the argument will infallibly be wrong.'"—*Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, 2d ed., Vol. II. p. 103, &c.

may have a very correct sense of the verisimilitudes that belong to many a question. The whole of the judging process may have been accurately gone through by him, though the metaphysique of the process should be wholly inaccessible to himself, or even though it should be equally inaccessible to the most subtle and philosophical of discerners. This does not hinder the process from going on rightly. The mechanism of the inner man works, though he never looks at the working of it. The judgment which is part of that mechanism may do its part and do it soundly and well—so as that evidence shall have its just impression upon him, though the philosophy of that evidence was never once the subject of any reflex investigation.

18. The testimony of the early Christians to the miracles of the evangelical record, has from time to time been addressed to the public by a series of writers who have very ably urged and expounded it. And in many thousands of instances it has had its proper effect on those who attended to it. The consistency and sincerity by which the whole narrative is so obviously pervaded—the number and opportunities of the original witnesses, and the manner in which their testimony has been sustained by the close and continuous succession of others who came after them—the rapid propagation of Christianity in the face of opposition, each of its friends having in the very fact of his conversion left his own distinct confirmation behind him, and each of its enemies having done the same thing in the fact of his silence—these topics have undergone repeated elucidation in the hands of the defenders

of Christianity; and the felt force of them on the minds of the readers was not countervailed by any thing like another force felt to be equal or superior, in the merely miraculous character of the events which were related. It had doubtless been all along the feeling that a miracle required a greater weight and amount of testimony to make it credible than an ordinary event. But it never, we believe, was imagined till about the middle of the last century, that such in the very nature of a miracle was its unconquerable resistance to proof, as to place it beyond the reach and possibility of being established by any testimony, whatever may be its character and whatever its abundance. This discovery was not made in the act of attending to the specific miracles of the New Testament, or of weighing the specific testimonies by which they are supported. It is a discovery grounded on the considerations of a general logic which takes cognizance either of the principles of reasoning, or of the properties of the reasoning mind. It never, we believe, was suggested to any mind, when immediately engaged in the direct process of viewing or of estimating the actual evidence for the miracles of the gospel. It is altogether the fruit of a reflex process, which terminate as it might, leaves the direct process to go on very much as before. We believe it of any candid and intelligent man that, after the study of Mr. Hume's Essay on Miracles, he, on betaking himself again to the study of the evangelical narratives and of all its vouchers, cannot help being impressed just as he wont to be. The speculation may stagger him;

and he labour and be at a loss when trying to adjust the metaphysics of the general question. But in reading Paley or Littleton or Butler, he does not feel that countervailing force in the mere idea of a miracle which the Scottish metaphysician has ascribed to it. It is on the general question only that he is bewildered—for when engaged with the particular question of the christian miracles—when in contrast with the *ipsa corpora* of this latter question, his old convictions return to him. In the act of reasoning on the immediate subject-matter of the New Testament history, his invincible tendency is to think and feel as before. It is when he reasons upon the reasoning that he gets involved again in helpless obscurity. This new principle of human belief he may find it exceedingly difficult satisfactorily to dispose of; but from what himself feels he may gather the strong and general apprehension, that with the phenomena of human belief it is not certainly in accordance.

19. The treatment which Mr. Hume's argument has met with in the two countries of England and Scotland is strikingly in unison with the genius of the respective people. The savans of our nation have certainly a greater taste and inclination for the reflex process, while it is more the property of our southern neighbours to enter, vigorously and immediately and with all that instinctive confidence wherewith nature has endowed us, on the business of the direct one. Our general tendency is to date our argument from a higher point than the English do—to reason for example about reasoning, before we proceed to reason about the matter on hand.

Nay, we are apt to be so far misled as to think that we should thoroughly comprehend the nature and properties of the instrument of ratiocination, before we proceed to the use of it. We must do this, it is thought, else we do not begin at the beginning—though in fact this were just such a beginning as that of the labourer who should imagine that ere he enters with the spade in his hand on the work of digging, he must first have computed the powers of its wedge, or ascertained the specific weight and cohesion of its materials. There is upon an infinity of subjects, much intellectual labour that may be most prosperously gone through, without any anterior examination on our part of the intellectual faculty. Our disposition in many a question is to move a previous question which must be first settled, ere we hold ourselves in a condition for starting fair with the one immediately before us. The English again, to borrow another phrase from their own parliamentary language, are for proceeding to the order of the day. And they are not deceived in the result—just because nature has not deceived them, nor has she given original principles to her children for the purpose of leading them astray. They are like men set forth on the survey of a landscape, and who proceed immediately to the business of seeing—whereas the others, ere they shall have any dealing with the objects of vision, must have settled their account with the instrument of vision—so that while the former are looking broadly and confidently outwards on the scene of observation, the latter are speculating on the organ and its retina, or have their thoughts intently

fastened on that point whence the optic nerve issues from its primitive obscurity among the convolutions of the brain. Now this is what our friends in the south seem to have no patience for. Their characteristic is not subtlety of discrimination on the powers and principles of the mind—but often admirable soundness and sagacity in the direct application of their powers to the practical object of coming to a right judgment on all important questions. Dr. Paley stands forth in full dimensions as an exemplar of this class. Strong and healthful in his faculties, he turns them to the immediate business before him, without one reflex look at the faculties themselves. He bestows on the argument of Hume a few touches of his sagacity—but soon flings it as if in distaste or intolerance away from him. We hold this to have been the general reception of it in our sister kingdom—and while taken up in grave and philosophic style by Campbell and Brown and Murray and Cook and Somerville and the Edinburgh Reviewers, it seems to have made comparatively little impression on the best authors of England—on Penrose for example, who bestows on it but slight and cursory notice, and Le Bas* who almost thinks it enough to have barely characterized it as a wretched fallacy.

20. Paley concludes his preparatory considerations to his book on the Evidences with the following short practical answer to Hume's essay —"But the short consideration which, inde-

* The valuable contributions, which Penrose and Le Bas have made to the argument from miracles, will be noticed afterwards.

pendently of every other, convinces me that there is no solid foundation in Mr. Hume's conclusion is the following. When a theorem is proposed to a mathematician, the first thing he does with it is to try it upon a simple case; and if it produce a false result, he is sure that there must be some mistake in the demonstration. Now to proceed in this way with what may be called Mr. Hume's theorem: If twelve men whose probity and good sense I had long known, should seriously and circumstantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impossible that they should be deceived; if the governor of the country, hearing a rumour of this account, should call these men into his presence, and offer them a short proposal, either to confess the imposture, or submit to be tied up to a gibbet; if they should refuse with one voice to acknowledge that there existed any falsehood or imposture in the case; if this threat were communicated to them separately, yet with no different effect; if it was at last executed; if I myself saw them, one after another, consenting to be racked, burnt or strangled rather than give up, the truth of their account; still, if Mr. Hume's rule be my guide, I am not to believe them. Now I undertake to say that there is not a sceptic in the world who would not believe them; or who would defend such incredulity."—There is something nationally characteristic, in their respective treatments of the same subject, by the Scottish Hume and the English Paley. It exhibits a contest between sound sense and subtle metaphysics. Paley, is quite right in his

concluding deliverance. The falsehood of the twelve men, in the circumstances and with the characteristics which he ascribes to them, would be more improbable than all the miracles put together of the New Testament. It is a correct judgment that he gives; but he declines to state the principles of the judgment. Nor is it necessary in ten thousand instances that a man should be able to assign the principles of his judgment, in order to make that judgment a sound and unexceptionable one. There is many a right intellectual process undergone by those, who never once reflect upon the process nor attempt the description of it. The direct process is one thing; the reflex view of it is another. Paley sees most instantly and vividly the falsehood of Hume's theorem in a particular case, and this satisfies him of a mistake in the demonstration. But this is a different thing from undertaking to show the fallacy of the demonstration on its own general principles—as different as were the refutation of a mathematical proposition by the measurement of a figure constructed in the terms of that proposition, from the general and logical refutation of it grounded on the import of the terms themselves. This is certainly a desirable thing to be done; and all we have to say at present is, that this is what Paley has failed to accomplish.

CHAPTER II.

On Man's instinctive Belief in the Constancy of Nature.

1. When a child strikes a table for the first time with a spoon, its delight in the consequent noise is not more obvious, than the confidence wherewith it anticipates a repetition of the noise on a repetition of the stroke. That the same antecedent should be followed by the same consequent does not appear to be the lesson of a protracted experience. The anticipation of a similar result from a similar conjunction of circumstances appears to be as strong in infancy as in manhood. We hold it to be not an acquired but an original faith, because we perceive it in full operation as far back as we can observe in the history of a human creature. We are not sensible of a period in the history of our own mind when this lesson had yet to be learned—neither can we perceive any indication in the youngest children, that they are destitute of this faith, or that they have yet subsequently to acquire it. Therefore we call it an instinctive faith—not the fruit of observation or experience, however much these may afterwards confirm it; so as to verify the glorious conclusion of an unfailing harmony between the actual truth of things, and the implanted tendencies of that intellect which the Creator hath given us.

2. It is a frequent and perhaps a natural impres-

sion that faith in the constancy of nature is not an instinct antecedent to experience, but the fruit of that experience, produced by it at first, and strengthened by every new or repeated experience of the constancy of nature afterwards. But it has been well remarked by Dr. Brown, that no repetition however frequent of the same sequence can account for our anticipation of its recurrence, without such an original principle of belief as we are now contending for. We admit that there is no logical connexion between the proposition that a certain event has happened once in given circumstances, and the proposition that the same event will happen always in the same circumstances. But neither is there any logical connexion between the proposition that the event has happened a thousand times in certain circumstances, and the proposition that in the same circumstances it will always so happen. The conversion of the past into the future, is made, not in virtue of a logical inference; but in virtue of an instinctive expectation and this at whatever stage the conversion may have been made. It is as confidently made at the dawn as at the maturity of the understanding—and after one observation of a sequence, as after twenty or any number of observations however great. We have not been schooled by experience into our belief of nature's constancy. Experience can only inform us of the past. It tells what has been—but we need another informant beside memory to assure us of what is to be. Experience tells us of the past constancy of nature—but experience alone or memory alone can give no

intimation of its future constancy. This irresistible persuasion comes to us from another quarter. It forms a distinct principle in the frame or workmanship of our intellectual system. It is a befitting theme of gratitude and wonder that this instinctive faith from within, should be responded to by the unexcepted fulfilment of Nature's actual and abiding constancy from without. But the one is not a derivative from the other. The two are in harmony—but it is a contingent harmony.

3. The use of experience is not to strengthen our faith in the constancy of Nature's sequences—but to inform us what the sequences actually are. We do not need to be made surer than we are already that the progressions of Nature are invariable—but we need to learn the steps of each progression. As far as we can discover of the human mind, it counts, and has at all times from its earliest capacities of thought, counted on the same antecedents being followed up by the same consequents. It is not the office of experience to lesson us into this confidence. But experience is indispensable to teach us,—which be the causal antecedents and which be the consequents related to them by the tie of invariableness, in those successions that are taking place around us. Our object in the repetition of an experiment is not to be made sure that what Nature has done once in certain circumstances, she will in the same circumstances do again. But it is to ascertain what the circumstances really be which are essential to the result in question. The truth is, that in that assemblage of circumstances which precedes some certain

event, there may only be one or so many of them that have causal influence upon the result, and the rest may be mere accompaniments whose presence is not necessary to the production of it. It is to distinguish the causal antecedents from the merely casual ones, that an experiment has often to be varied or done over again. It is not that we ever have the least suspicion of Nature as if she fluctuated in her processes. But it is to disentangle these processes from that crowd of accessaries, wherewith they are at times beset or encompassed, that we have so repeatedly to question her. For this purpose we withdraw certain ingredients from the assemblage. We supply certain others. We mix them up in various proportions—and all this, not to strengthen our belief in the regularity of Nature—but to discover what the trains or successions are, according to which this regularity proceeds. We are not sure that the instinct by which we are led to anticipate the same result in the same circumstances is stronger in manhood than in infancy. But in manhood we know the result and we know the circumstances. This seems the whole fruit of experience. It teaches not the strength or invariableness of the connexion that runs through all nature—but it teaches the terms of that connexion.

4. And it is instructive to observe the real process of an infant's mind, during that education by which it becomes acquainted with surrounding nature. When it strikes the wooden table with a spoon, it needs not repeat the stroke for the purpose of obtaining a surer or firmer expectation of the consequent noise. That expectation is probably as

confident at the first as afterward—and it is of importance to remark, that at the outset of its experience it is quite general and indiscriminate. For instance, it would anticipate the same noise by striking the spoon against any surface whatever, as when placed on a carpet, or on the level of a smooth sandy beach. Originally it would expect the same noise by striking on a soft yielding substance that it did by striking on the hard table—and the office of experience is not to strengthen its hope of a similar result from a similar act, but in truth to correct the exuberance of that hope. It is to teach it discrimination—and how in the midst of a general resemblance, to mark those minuter differences which in fact present it with antecedents that are really different, and which should lead it to expect results that are different also. It is thus that the primary undirected and diffused expectation, of meeting again with what it met once in the act of striking with a spoon on a wooden surface, comes afterwards to be modified. It learns —not that there is a surer tie between the terms of nature's sequences than it imagined at the first —but it learns how to distinguish between the terms which are really different, though before it had vaguely confounded them. And so it is taught with each distinct antecedent to look for a distinct consequent—instead of expecting the same noise by the infliction of a stroke upon all surfaces, to expect no noise at all by a stroke upon the sand, and different sorts of noises by a stroke on different surfaces, whether wood or metal or stone or liquid.*

* This phenomenon of the infant mind will be found not only

5. Now this may explain how it is, that our faith in the constancy of nature *appears* to grow with experience—and that, notwithstanding the obvious

to throw light on the origin and progress of our belief in testimony, but to accord with the surmises both of Dugald Stewart and Turgot, when they approximate to what we have long regarded as the true account or philosophy of the process described by the human mind in the formation of abstract and general ideas. The truth is that our disposition to generalize by noticing the points of resemblance between different objects, often takes the precedency of our disposition to specialize by noticing their points of distinction or dissimilarity—and so, at the commencement of our mental history, we are liable to confound when we ought to discriminate. This observation rightly applied will be found to correct both the philosophy of Dr. Campbell and the scepticism of Hume on the subject of human testimony.

The following sentences from Dugald Stewart and from Condorcet's life of Turgot will evince the existence of this thought in embryo, or as an undeveloped germ in the minds of both these philosophers.

"This remark becomes, in my opinion, much more luminous and important, by being combined with another very original one, which is ascribed to Turgot by Condorcet, and which I do not recollect to have seen taken notice of by any later writer on the human mind. According to the common doctrine of logicians, we are led to suppose that our knowledge begins in an accurate and minute acquaintance with the characteristical properties of individual objects; and that it is only by the slow exercise of comparison and abstraction, that we attain to the notion of classes or *genera*. In opposition to this idea it was a maxim of Turgot's, that some of our most abstract and general notions are among the earliest we form. What meaning he annexed to this maxim, we are not informed; but if he understood it in the same sense in which I am disposed to interpret it, he appears to me entitled to the credit of a very valuable suggestion with respect to the natural progress of human knowledge. The truth is, that our first perceptions lead us invariably to confound together things which have very little in common; and that the specifical differences of individuals do not begin to be marked with precision till the powers of observation and reasoning have attained to a certain degree of maturity. To a similar indistinctness of perception are to be ascribed the mistakes, about the most familiar appearances which we daily see committed by those domesticated animals, with whose instincts and habits we have an opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted. As an instance of this, it is sufficient to mention the terror which a horse

strength of this principle in very early childhood. After an infant has once struck the table with a spoon and elicited the noise which it likes, it proceeds with all confidence to repeat the stroke—not on the table only, but on other substances, in expectation of a similar noise to that which had pleased and gratified it before. But it is speedily checked in this expectation. It learns that with every difference in the antecedent circumstances, there may be a difference in the result—and it further learns that there may often be real differences which escape its observation. Now the longer it has been accustomed to witness the same phenomenon in the same *ostensible* circumstances, it becomes the more confident that these are the only essential circumstances to the result, or at least that the ostensible circumstances always involve the essential or the real ones. Should it awake in the morning, and perceive the nurse or mother by its side and smiling over it—then were there but a moment of prior consciousness, and the recollection of what had happened yesterday, it might on the next morning open its eyes with the

sometimes discovers in passing, on the road, a large stone, or the waterfall of a mill."—*Stewart's Philosophy of the Human Mind*, Vol. II., p. 242—4.

"M. Turgot croyoit qu'on s'était trompe en imaginant, qu'en général l'esprit n'acquiert des idées générales ou abstraites que par la comparaison d'idées plus particulières. Au contraire, nos premières idées sont tres-générales, puisque ne voyant d'abord qu'un petit nombre de qualités, notre idée renferme tous les êtres auxquels ces qualités sont communes. En nous éclairant en examinant d'avantage, nos idées deviennent plus particulières sans jamais atteindre le dernier terme; et ce qui a pu tromper les métaphysiciens, c'est qu'alors précisément nous apprenons que ces idées sont plus générales que nous ne l'avions d'abord supposé."—*Vie de Turgot*, p. 159. Berne, 1787.

expectation of being again regaled by the same spectacle. We are not sure, but that the confidence of this expectation would be as strong, if not stronger at the first than ever afterwards. Every disappointment in fact would weaken it—for the infant would thus learn that the presence of the causal antecedent, which gave rise to the phenomenon, was not always involved in the circumstance of its emerging from the darkness of sleep to the visible objects of day. Still it holds true that the fewer the disappointments were to which it was exposed, the original confidence would be less weakened. The recurrence of the same thing for the days of a week would diminish its apprehension of a disappointment or failure—and still more for the days of a month or the days of a year. Yet we are not sure, if any experience, however lengthened, would ever beget a stronger confidence than that original and unshaken confidence that is felt prior to all experience. It seems the primary faith of every mind that there shall be a constant recurrence of the same effect in the same circumstances. It is a subsequent lesson to this that the circumstances are liable to unexpected variation—and so a protracted experience may be requisite to ascertain when they are more and when they are less liable, or whether they have sustained variation at all. Still even in cases where the last conclusion has been come at, and with the advantage of a long experience in its favour, the resulting anticipation may not be of greater strength than was that original anticipation wherewith the infant looked for a repetition of the sound from its first repetition

of a stroke. This long experience does not act as a confirmer to strengthen the first anticipation. It only acts as a restorative against the weakening effect of a subsequent experience; and by which it may, as if by the removal of a disturbing force, bring the confidence, not beyond, but bring it up to the strength which it originally had.

6. It will thus be seen what the precise object is, of repetition in experiments. It is not to strengthen our faith in the uniformity of Nature. It is not to assure ourselves any more than we are already that the same antecedents will always be followed up by the same consequents. It is to ascertain what the precise causal antecedents actually are. For this purpose we introduce variations into the circumstances of the experiment. We supply new conditions. We abstract old ones. We make changes both on the presence and the proportion of certain ingredients—and thus learn to distinguish what is merely accessary from what is efficient in the process. We come to fix on the real and proper antecedents at last—and when in an *experimentum crucis*, these are admitted and no other, we decide finally that they and they alone are essential to the result in question.

7. Experience does not add to the confidence wherewith we look for the same result in the same circumstances. It may rather be said to correct or to modify that confidence. It teaches us how liable we are to be deceived by semblances; and that often there is an apparent similarity where there is no real one. In this case, when counting on a recurrence of the same, the presumption is

thwarted by the occurrence of a different event. Instead of confidence we in certain views learn caution and distrust at the school of experience—not that we ever question the invariableness wherewith the same antecedents are always related to the same consequents—but that we have learned how under the guise of similarity there may not be sameness; and that in virtue of some unseen difference in the circumstances, an unexpected difference in the result may arise from it.

8. But it is well for our future argument to distinguish what the confidence is which is lessened from what the confidence is which remains unshaken. The child's general confidence in the production of a noise by the stroke of its spoon on any surface has been thwarted and put an end to—but its special confidence in the production of a noise by the stroke of the spoon on its own wooden table continues as strong as at the first. There is no mistake in that original and instinctive faith of nature, by which we are led to expect that the same antecedents will be followed in invariable succession by the same consequents—and it is not this which is corrected by experience. But we are liable to a perpetual mistake, in confounding together as the same those antecedents which are really different—and it is the office of experience to correct this mistake, by teaching us so to discriminate as to distinguish between the things which are really different. There is a beautiful accordance between our primary instincts of belief, and the lessons of our ultimate experience. We set out strong in the presumption of Nature's

uniformity; and in this we are disappointed at the first—only because we mistake Nature, and confound when we ought to discriminate. In proportion as we learn to discriminate, the confidence is restored—and we find it was no mistake that Nature proceeded by trains of invariable phenomena, and that the only fallacy lay in our mistaking and misreading the phenomena themselves. It is thus that in the further progress of experience the temporary cloud is dissipated; and it at once appears that every process is steadfast, and that every instinct is sure—that Nature puts no deceitful expectation, and whispers no false promises into the hearts of her children.

9. Let us now reassemble the different leading phenomena of man's belief in the constancy of Nature. He in the first instance is furnished with this belief and feels it strongly, antecedently to experience. In the second instance, the experience does not add any further assurance to this primary and instinctive faith. It rather seems to check its anticipations, insomuch that distrust rather than confidence in the results of experience seems to be the growth of our advancing observation. But this proceeds not from Nature being untrue to her promise, which in the shape of an original instinct she makes to all men, of always following up the same antecedents by the same consequents. It proceeds from our imperfect observation, whether of the antecedents or consequents, by which we imagine them to be the same when they are really different. In proportion as this imperfect observation is rectified, the steadfastness of Nature

becomes more manifest. The promise which she made to us at the outset is more and more vindicated—and we at length are fully reassured of an unexcepted harmony between the instincts of our internal constitution and the external truth of things.

10. We may thus perceive the consistency between two propositions which appear to be at variance. The first is that experience gives no addition of strength to our primary Faith in the constancy of Nature. The second is that the oftener we witness the same result in the same apparent circumstances, the more confidently do we look for that result in these circumstances in all time coming. It is not that we ever doubt the constancy of Nature. The doubt is, whether the same causal antecedents which give rise to the result be always involved in the same apparent circumstances. Should the same individual regularly pass my window every day at the same hour for a month together, I by the end of that time should have acquired a pretty strong persuasion that at the wonted hour he would again make his appearance. It is obvious that this persuasion would become stronger with every new repetition of the phenomenon, till at length I might come to regularly count upon it with a very high feeling of probability upon its side. And yet in this instance, I may not at all know the causal antecedents of the appearances in question. There might be nothing at least in the ostensible antecedents to indicate the causal or real ones—nothing in the mere occurrence of the hour which can explain to

me, why it is that this one person so regularly presents himself. It is enough however to find that so it is—and the longer or the oftener that so it is, the firmer will be my expectation of its recurrence. The expectation will according to the various instances attain to various degrees of strength—and in some will reach indefinitely near to moral certainty.

11. The same thing will happen, if in throwing a couple of dice, for a number of times there shall be the regular presentation of the same faces in both of them. The expectation of the phenomenon will gain in strength just with the continuance of it—and that, anterior to our knowledge of its cause. Even previous to this knowledge it might approach to moral certainty, merely by the length and constancy of the repetition.—Yet no experience however prolonged will give a stronger assurance than we might have had at once by observing that the dice was loaded, and thus obtaining knowledge of the real antecedent.

12. There are cases when without the knowledge, or at least without any reflection on the cause, this constancy of a recurrence will lead us to look for it with all the confidence of moral certainty. The return of the morning's light, and the recurrence of about two tides every day are the examples of this which first occur to us. The causal antecedent of the former phenomenon may not be reflected on, and of the latter may not be known. Yet this does not affect the confidence wherewith we look forward to the repetition of them. It is a confidence which evidently grows with the number of

repetitions provided that these have occurred with undeviating constancy. Yet we are not sure if the unvarying experience of a whole lifetime will give a stronger assurance, than that wherewith a child expects the recurrence of a noise by striking its spoon upon the table after having heard it but once, or even by striking it upon any other surface before that experience had taught it to distinguish between that which is sonorous and that which is not so. The strength then of the primary confidence on the part of the child, and that of the acquired confidence on the part of the man, will be found to have originated in distinct causes. The former is anterior to experience, and an instinct of the understanding, by which, from the earliest dawn of thought, we feel assured that the same antecedents will always be followed up by the same consequents. The latter again is the fruit or the lesson of experience; and the effect, it should be remarked, is not to build up a confidence that is already perfect. That the same antecedents will be followed by the same consequents is a truth whereof we have the axiomatic certainty from the beginning of life to the close of it. But we often mistake the antecedents, thinking them to be the same when they are really different—and it is the office of experience to rectify this mistake. We may even never come to know the efficient antecedents at all, as in the case of the unlearned who are conversant with phenomena but have not so much as a thought about the causes of them, save that, in the circumstances by which these phenomena are wont to be preceded, their causes must be present or be

somehow involved in them. The darkness of night is not the cause of the light of day—but they have learned by frequent observation, that, at the expiry of a certain period of darkness, the cause of this light comes into operation. Experience does not tell that the same cause always produces the same effect. This we had been told previously. But experience tells what the circumstances are in which the same cause is to be met with—and the oftener we so meet with it, the greater is our confidence that in the same circumstances we shall meet with it and with its invariable consequent again. These two tellings are wholly distinct from each other. By the first we are assured of the invariable operation of causes. By the second we learn in what assemblage of circumstances the same causes are seldomer or oftener or always to be found. In regard to the first there is the utmost strength of anticipation from the outset of our mental history. In regard to the second there is a growing strength of anticipation which approaches indefinitely towards a full assurance.

13. That is well nigh to a full assurance wherewith we anticipate a high-water about every twelve hours. We can conceive this assurance to be disappointed. It is an imaginable case that there might have been the intermission of one tide—giving rise to an interval of somewhat more than twenty-four hours between two high-waters. Let us suppose the sea at its lowest ebb, at the very time when, according to the rate and regularity of all past experience, there should have been an intermediate high-water. The question is on what

evidence ought this to be believed?—or what force and character of proof can prevail over that confident expectation, which, on the strength of an observed constancy during all the years of our recollection, we had been led to form?

14. We shall not at present oppose to the strength of this expectation either the evidence of sense or the evidence of testimony. But there is a certain device of illustration which we shall employ, as being the most effectual preparative that we can think of for the evolving of our main argument.

15. Instead then of having the evidence of sense for this anomalous low-water—we can imagine the observer placed at a distance from the sea—and furnished with his information of every rise and fall in its level by means of a tide-index. The reality or the possibility of such an instrument is not essential to the validity of our argument. An hypothetical reasoning may not be the less sound, because of its imaginary data—and, if we can demonstrate a perfect analogy between these data and others which are real, between the arbitrary conditions which we find it convenient in the first instance to assume and the actual conditions of the question that waits to be resolved, then, by a substitution of the one for the other, we may arrive at the solution that is wanted.

16. We may conceive then that on the day of the anomalous low-water, the tide-index also remained low. To set aside all but my own personal experience in the matter, there might have been a thousand instances of observed regularity on my

part, in regard to the occurrence of high-water—in which case the probability against the occurrence of an anomalous low-water would be as a thousand to one. It may further be conceived that though on all the other thousand occasions, I observed a perfect harmony between the phenomena of high and low-water and the indications of the instrument—yet that on one occasion the instrument deceived me—it having anomalously stood at low-water though there was high-water on the sea as usual. In this case my expectation of a high-water grounded on past experience will prevail over my faith in the information of the tide-index. The truth is that against the actual occurrence of the anomalous low-water, the probability is as a thousand to one—whereas against a wrong deposition on the part of the instrument the probability is only as a thousand to two. There is a double chance for an irregularity on the part of the instrument, rather than an irregularity on the part of the ocean—and I am therefore not yet dislodged from my belief that though the instrument did attest a low-water, the high-water took place as usual.

17. One can imagine a still greater degree of irregularity on the part of the tide-index. The number of failures (including the case in question) may have been five or ten or twenty or fifty—in which case the chances of error in the information given would just be represented by these respective numbers—and I would persist in my conviction of there having been a high-water with a strength equal in the first case to that of two to one, in the second of five to one, in the third of ten to one,

in the fourth of twenty to one, and in the fifth with a strength equal to that of fifty to one.

18. But we can imagine an instrument that never misgave or made a false indication in the whole course of our experience. We may have observed the stated recurrence of a high-water at the usual interval a thousand times, and as many times, we may have without fail observed the rise in the tide-index which corresponds thereunto. That a low-water should occur instead of the next expected high-water is a thing improbable in the ratio of a thousand to one. That the high-water should occur and yet the index point to a low-water is also a thing improbable, and in the same ratio of a thousand to one. The one improbability exactly balances or neutralizes the other. The mind is left in a midway state or in a state of pure scepticism on the question—and it remains to be seen whether it is possible by means of any accession to the testimony of these tide-indices, to arrive at a legitimate belief in the occurrence of an anomalous low-water; or, to express it otherwise, belief in the violation of a wonted order to which we never had witnessed a single exception in the whole of our past experience.

19. It may be conceived in this way. The same instrument which set in a particular way so relates it to the water of the sea as to indicate the variations of its level, may be so set as to relate it similarly to other water of variable level, as to that of a pond or a well or a vessel, the liquid in all which was subject to alternate elevations and depressions. We have already made the supposition of having observed the unfailing punctuality

of its informations in regard to the tides—so as to establish the probability of a thousand to one in favour of that information being true. But should it inform us of a low-water at the time when, on the strength of a thousand past instances, we were left to expect a high-water the probability for the truth of this information is exactly countervailed by an equal probability opposed to it. By applying the same instrument however to the measurement of other fluctuations in the level of water beside those of the sea, the samples of its correct indication may be multiplied indefinitely — and instead of a thousand observed instances in which it spoke the truth, we may in virtue of this larger application be able to allege twenty thousand. After this it remains no longer a contest of equal experiences, but of unequal—and the difference is all in favour of the witnessing instrument. If it depone to a matter against which, apart from its own information, there is the probability of a thousand to one, it should now be recollected that in the verity of this information there is a probability of twenty thousand to one. Or in other words we have a probability of twenty to one for the anomalous low-water. So that with the evidence of one instrument alone, the violation of a long observed order may be abundantly established; and it is a possible thing that the experience which stands opposed to the testimony of this solitary witness may, singly in the witness itself, be greatly surpassed by the experience in its favour.*

* The accuracy of the tide-gauge may obtain enhanced confirmation by observing the truth of its depositions, not at the

20. Or the accession to the evidence of the tide-index may be obtained in another way. Instead of widening the range of its application, so as to collect twenty thousand instances of its accuracy wherewith to overbear the thousand instances of regular high-water, the very same power and superiority of evidence could be had by means of another tide-index. We have supposed a number of these instruments which, either from their various mechanisms, or from their being constructed with more or less skill, gave forth their depositions with more or less accuracy. Let us compute the effect then which lies in the concurrence of two testimonies to the fact of an anomalous low-water —one given by a tide-index of yet unfailing correctness, and another which in the thousand instances of regular high-water failed no less than fifty times. Still it has been twenty times right for once being wrong; and the presumption in favour of its testimony for any indifferent thing is just as twenty to one—though in favour of its testimony for an anomalous low-water in the face of a thousand regular high-waters it be only as one to fifty. This however does not prevent the multiple effect of its evidence when united with that of another instrument. This tide-index which has been right

highest and lowest levels of the tide only, but at all intermediate ones—so that our experience of this accuracy may greatly overpass our experience of the regularity whether of high or low water.

This mathematical style of reasoning on a question which respects the truth of Christianity will be excused—first by those who feel it to be effective; and secondly because if effective, it is the best fitted to neutralize the mischievous influence superadded to the scepticism of Hume by the great name of La Place.

without exception in a thousand instances, has acquired the probability of a thousand to one for its next deposition—and, should the other instrument which has been right twenty times for one, agree in the same deposition, the united testimony of both has precisely the force of twenty thousand to one for any indifferent thing—and in the present case of twenty to one for an anomalous low-water. There is no one versant in the doctrine of probabilities who will dispute the soundness or accuracy of these conclusions—a doctrine not only of mathematical precision in the abstract—but whose precision is verified on the average in all the practical affairs of experience and human life. The probability arising from the concurrence of the two testimonies which we have now specified is just as we have stated it. And to vary the supposition—should the tide-index which has failed ten times in a thousand, agree in its evidence with the tide-index that has failed twenty times—still the former has only been wrong once in a hundred times and the other once in fifty—so that their united testimony has in it the strength of five thousand to one for an indifferent thing and five to one for an anomalous low-water. It were easy to calculate the results in all other instances of agreement. The joint testimony of the tide-gauge that has failed five times with that which has failed fifty times has in it the absolute force of four thousand to one, or the relative force of four to one for an anomalous low-water. The joint effect of the one that has failed five times with the one that has failed ten is equivalent to twenty in favour of

the same fact—and should the evidence of the one that has failed twenty times be added to the two former, the testimony of all the three would have the force of no less than a million to one for any indifferent thing, or of a thousand to one for the anomalous deviation which is the subject of our argument.

21. On the subject of the amount of evidence that lies in the concurrence of two or more such notices as we are now specifying, it must be observed that these notices should be independent of each other. For example, when the tide-index B announces a low-water, it must not be because the tide-index A announces the same thing. Each by being similarly related to the waters of the sea is subject to a common influence from it—but neither should have any influence the one upon the other. It is easy to perceive that in the present instance they stand so disjoined, as to give us the advantage of all the united strength that lies in separate and independent testimonies. It is not because A gives a right deposition that B gives the same. B is sometimes wrong when A is right—and beside each would operate precisely as it does though the other were removed or taken down.

22. By the concurrence of independent notices on the subject, the amount of evidence for an anomalous low-water may become indefinitely great. There may be other tide-indices, and that too of the best sort, in other houses beside our own—and each of which has never been known to present a false indication in the whole course of human experience. The concurrent testimony of two

such instruments yields the probability of a thousand —of three no less than a million—till the number of distinct and independent testimonies be so great as to make the superiority of evidence quite overwhelming, and to afford practically the force of an absolute moral certainty on the side of an anomalous low-water. Or, instead of an anomalous if it be called a miraculous low-water—this is only lengthening out the experience that we have had of Nature's regularity in this department of observation. Instead of one deviation in a thousand instances of observed constancy, the event in question may be the only deviation that has taken place in the regular succession of tides since the commencement of the world. To meet this we have just to imagine a tide-index that was never known to give forth a false intimation; and to overmatch this, we have just to imagine so many distinct and separate intimations from a certain number of such indices. The falsity of the instrument may be as great an anomaly or if you will as great a miracle as the phenomenon of which it tells —and the concurrence of a few such miracles may establish for the truth of the miracle deponed to as overwhelming a superiority of evidence as before. It remains to be seen how much or how little can be done in this way by living witnesses—but it seems very clear to us on the strength of the above reasoning, that at the mouth of two or three inanimate witnesses the truth of a miracle may be established.

CHAPTER III.

On the Sufficiency of human Testimony for the Proof of Miracles.

MR. HUME'S OBJECTION TO THE TRUTH OF MIRACLES.

SECTION I.—*On the Origin of our Belief in Testimony.*

1. THE following is Dr. Campbell's abstract of Hume's argument on the subject of miracles:—"Experience is our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact. Experience is in some things variable, in some things uniform. A variable experience gives rise only to probability; an uniform experience amounts to a proof. Probability always supposes an opposition of experiments and observations, where the one side is found to overbalance the other, and to produce a degree of evidence proportioned to the superiority. In such cases we must balance the opposite experiments, and deduct the lesser number from the greater, in order to know the exact force of the superior evidence. Our belief or assurance of any fact from the report of eye-witnesses, is derived from no other principle than experience; that is, our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the report of witnesses. Now if the fact attested partakes of the marvellous, if it is such as has

seldom fallen under our observation, here is a contest of two opposite experiences, of which the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes, and the superior can only operate on the mind by the force which remains. The very same principle of experience, which gives us a certain degree of assurance, in the testimony of witnesses, gives us also, in this case, another degree of assurance, against the fact which they endeavour to establish, from which contradiction, there necessarily arises a counterpoise, and mutual destruction of belief and authority. Further, if the fact affirmed by the witnesses, instead of being only marvellous, is really miraculous; if besides, the testimony considered apart and in itself, amounts to an entire proof; in that case there is proof against proof, of which the strongest must prevail, but still with a diminution of its force, in proportion to that of its antagonist. A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire, as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. And if so, it is an undeniable consequence, that it cannot be surmounted by any proof whatever from testimony. A miracle, therefore, however attested, can never be rendered credible, even in the lowest degree."

2. And the following is the outset of Dr. Campbell's reply—"In answer to this, I propose first to prove, that the whole is built upon a false hypothesis. That the evidence of testimony is derived solely from experience, which seems to be

an axiom of this writer, is at least not so incontestable a truth, as he supposes it; that on the contrary, testimony hath a natural and original influence on belief, antecedent to experience, will, I imagine, easily be evinced. For this purpose, let it be remarked, that the earliest assent which is given to testimony by children, and which is previous to all experience, is in fact the most unlimited; that by a gradual experience of mankind, it is gradually contracted, and reduced to narrower bounds. To say, therefore, that our diffidence in testimony is the result of experience, is more philosophical, because more consonant to truth, than to say that our faith in testimony has this foundation. Accordingly, youth, which is unexperienced, is credulous; age on the contrary is distrustful. Exactly the reverse would be the case, were this author's doctrine just."

3. Such is the opening of the controversy between Hume and Campbell on the subject of miracles—and wherewith the latter ushers in his celebrated reply to the argument of the former. We have long stood in doubt of the validity of that reply—notwithstanding the singular acumen and dexterity and power of expression by which it is characterized. We still hold it to be neither a clear nor a conclusive one—and do therefore feel an insecurity and a want of completeness in the christian defence, whenever this sceptical reasoning of Mr. Hume is again advanced by any of those more recent writers who have succeeded him on the side of infidelity.

4. We, in the first place, doubt whether he is

right in the theory which he proposes respecting the origin of our faith in testimony. In opposition to Hume who grounds it on experience, he makes it a principle *sui generis* in the mental constitution, or an aboriginal instinct of the understanding. We shall in the course of the following discussion have to remark on certain phenomena of our belief in testimony which incline us to resolve it, with Mr. Hume, into our faith in the constancy of nature. But we are anxious to have it understood that the refutation, which we shall venture to propose, neither requires nor presupposes any absolute deliverance upon this question. We undertake to prove his conclusion to be wrong, not *because* but *although*, his premises should be right. We are inclined to think them right. But though we should be in error here, this is not an error by which our counter-argument to Mr. Hume is in the least affected. It is of no consequence, whether we affirm with him the truth of his own principle respecting the origin of our faith in testimony. There is a difference between affirming it and allowing it. The latter is what we certainly do; and a refutation should be held all the more decisive—if it can afford to an adversary those very assumptions on which his argument is built.

5. But Secondly, Though Dr. Campbell were right, in the view he gave, respecting the origin of our faith in testimony, we do not see that this is of decisive avail, on his side of the controversy. Even though experience were not the source of our belief in testimony, it may still be the measure by which to regulate the degree of confidence that

we ought to repose in it. The faith may come from one quarter; and yet the test by which to compute the extent of that faith, or the amount of credit due in particular instances may come from another. We may or we may not be born with a precipitate tendency to believe in the testimony of our fellow-men—and yet if it be found in experience, that testimony in certain given circumstances had deceived us at the rate of once in ten times—it is precisely at that rate that we should deduct from our confidence in the testimony offered in these circumstances; and our doing so would meet the approval of every enlightened understanding. So that whatever experience Mr. Hume can allege against the testimony which has been given for the miracles of Christianity, whether it relates to the characteristics of the testimony or to its subject-matter—the improbability grounded on such experience will have all to be grappled with—an improbability, we fear, which cannot be neutralized, and far less answered, by any metaphysical statement respecting the principle of our belief, on the question which of them is original and which of them is but derived and secondary in the constitution of human nature.

6. And Thirdly, This assertion of our faith in testimony being an original and distinct principle from the faith of experience, so far from clearing the question or advancing it towards a settlement, seems but to make it more puzzling and inextricable than before. Dr. Campbell charges Mr. Hume, when the latter alleges experience in opposition to testimony, with the attempt to balance things which

are not homogeneous. Now it is precisely, if not homogeneous, that it seems impossible to arbitrate betwixt them. Certain it is, that the rarity of an event demands a greater amount of testimony for the establishment of our conviction in its truth, and greatest of all when the event is so rare as to be miraculous. But the question what augmentation of testimony on the one hand will overcome the augmentation of improbability from a deficient experience on the other, seems of impossible solution, should these two not be homogeneous elements. If not homogeneous they are not commensurable—so that the introduction of this principle on the part of Dr. Campbell instead of helping on the question to a deliverance, has only mystified it to our understanding, and made of it altogether a more baffling and hopeless speculation.

7. We on these grounds are not satisfied with the soundness of Dr. Campbell's refutation; and we shall attempt to substitute another. It is certainly not essential to the validity of the second, that the insufficiency of the first should be exposed —yet both from the interest of the subject in itself, and also from our wish to deliver the argument on the side of Christianity of all that we hold to be questionable or weak, we should like to prosecute a little further our inquiry into this supposed distinction between faith in testimony and the faith of experience—and that, chiefly with the view of stating our main exceptions to the reasoning of Dr. Campbell.

8. After that we have observed once or oftener the prior term of any particular sequence in

nature followed up by its posterior term, it is not necessary that both should come into view on any new occasion, to make us believe that both have on that occasion actually taken place. For this purpose, it is enough, that any one of the terms should be observed by us—and it is a matter of indifference which of them. If we have seen the prior term A, we conclude that it will be followed by the posterior term B though we should not see B—or if we have seen the posterior term B, we infer that it has been preceded by the prior term A, though A in like manner has not been seen by us. For our belief in the existence of the one term, even of that which we have seen, we have had the evidence of observation. For our belief in the existence of the other, or of that which we have not seen, it would, perhaps, be more correct, and certainly more distinctive, to say, that we have had the evidence of experience.

9. Ere proceeding further, it may be proper to remark, that it is not necessary, for the two terms in question, to be contiguous in the order of successive nature. The truth of the inference depends not on the closeness, but on the certainty of the connexion between them. Between A and F, there may be a train of intermediate events—yet if A always originate that train, and F be always the concluding term of it, we should, from the observation of either singly, conclude the existence of the other, with as great confidence as if they stood related in immediate succession. It is of no consequence to the argument whether F be the posterior or the postreme term to A—the posterior

term of a sequence, or the postreme term of a series.

10. Now an event in Nature, and the testimony which affirms it, stand related to each other precisely in this way. The one is the posterior, or, if you will, the postreme term to the other. There may be intermediate steps between the event and the testimony—its impression on the belief of the witness—its continued hold of his memory—the opportunity of narrating it to others—the circumstances which prompted him to make the communication—and lastly, the communication itself. There is here a progression of terms, each related to the one immediately next it, in the way of antecedent and consequent—and there seems nothing in the process at all distinguishable from any other chain of sequences, when from the seen and the present, we infer the anterior and the unseen term, lying back at some distance either more or less remote in the train of causation. To infer the reality of an event from the testimony which relates it, seems in no way distinguishable from the process by which we infer the reality of some antecedent term in any other observed progression in Nature, from a subsequent term now manifesting itself to the senses. It is an inference grounded on our past observation of the conjunction between the event and the testimony. Or, in other words, the evidence of testimony seems resolvible into that of experience.

11. Now, this is not the opinion of Dr. Campbell; nor of any, we believe, who have taken part with him, in the controversy against Mr. Hume.

He holds the evidence of testimony to be distinct from that of experience, and resolvible into a separate and original principle of its own. It serves unnecessarily to complicate a subject, when first principles are multiplied without cause. But, when to serve a cause, that which is pronounced upon as a first principle, is far from being obviously so—it goes to mystify a subject, and to weaken exceedingly the impression of the argument which is founded thereupon.

12. The reason which Dr. Campbell alleges for faith in testimony being an instinctive and original principle, and not derived from any other, is, that it is strongest in infancy, and that it becomes weaker as we advance to manhood and old age. He would hold it, therefore to be apart from the faith of experience—seeing, that experience does not strengthen, but rather weaken our faith in testimony. It is our diffidence, rather than our confidence in testimony, which seems to be the result of experience. And, on the unsuspecting trust and simplicity of childhood, contrasted with the growing jealousy and slowness of belief, which are characteristic of those who have had many years of experience and been much conversant with the world—would he ground the conclusion, that our faith in testimony is one of the primary and independent principles of our nature.

13. We have already said, that even though this were conceded to Dr. Campbell, it is by no means sure, that it ought to be regarded as of any service in his argument. Though we should grant, that it was not experience which originated

our credit in testimony—yet from his own account, it would appear, that experience limited the degree of credit which was due to it. Faith in testimony would seem, by his own account, to operate as a blind and undiscerning instinct which led, in the first instance, astray, till rectified by a subsequent experience. If it be the office of experience to regulate and restrain the headlong tendencies of the original instinct, Dr. Campbell will not deny that this is her rightful office; and that, on the whole, she discharges it rightly. This is very like bringing the decisions of our intuitive faith in testimony to the test of experience —or making experience the arbiter of when we ought and when we ought not to repose our confidence in the testimony of others. At this rate experience, if not the originator, is at least the corrector of our belief in testimony—and, after all, supplies the rule or the measure, by which we ascertain the degree of credit, that is due to it. This would leave Hume's argument, such as it is, as much or as little in possession of the ground as before—and, we fear, that this assertion of our faith in testimony, as a separate and original principle of man's constitution, has in no way helped, but on the contrary injured the cause.*

* It seems to have been a very general faith of our Scottish Philosophers, that belief in testimony is an independent principle of our nature. The following passage, not to instance other authors, occurs in the writings of Dr. Adam Smith:—"There seems to be in young children an instinctive disposition to believe whatever they are told. Nature seems to have judged it necessary for their preservation that they should, for some

13. But let us try to ascertain what this argument of Dr. Campbell amounts to. There is really nothing in that diffidence of the veracity of others which he has noticed, that is at all inconsistent with its derivation from experience. The child who has observed, once, the conjunction between an event and the testimony which relates it, is in the same circumstances, with regard to this sequence—as the child who has observed, once, the conjunction between a stroke on the table with his spoon and the noise that proceeds from it. In the latter case, it will anticipate a repetition of the noise from any stroke upon any substance—and in the former case, it will infer the truth of an event from any testimony of any witness. The confidence, in both instances, is alike strong and alike indiscriminating; and in both instances is checked and limited in the very

time at least, put implicit confidence in those to whom the care of their childhood, and of the earliest and most necessary part of their education is intrusted. Their credulity, accordingly, is excessive, and it requires long and much experience, of the falsehood of mankind, to reduce them to a reasonable degree of diffidence and distrust. In grown up people, the degrees of credulity are, no doubt, very different. The wisest and most experienced are generally the least credulous. But the man scarce lives who is not more credulous than he ought to be, and who does not, upon many occasions, give credit to tales, which not only turn out to be perfectly false, but which a very moderate degree of reflection and attention might have taught him could not well be true. The natural disposition is always to believe. It is acquired wisdom and experience only that teach incredulity, and they very seldom teach it enough. The wisest and most cautious of us all, frequently gives credit to stories which he himself is afterwards both ashamed and astonished that he could possibly think of believing."—*Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Vol. II., p. 363, eleventh edition. See also *Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind*, Chap. vi., Sect. 24.

same way. So long as the child continues to strike on the table, or on any sonorous substance whatever, it will experience the wonted noise. So long as it hears the testimony of a sincere witness, it will experience in the corresponding fact the truth of his attestation. But, at this stage, it will expect a noise from all sorts of substances —and at this stage, too, it will count on the truth of all sorts of testimony. The whole amount of the matter is, that it has not yet learned to sort and to discriminate—and the precise office of experience is, to enable it to do so. This is all the amount of the growing diffidence which Dr. Campbell speaks of. In the one case, the child has experienced that all impulsion will not be followed up by noise. In the other case, it has experienced that all testimony has not been preceded by the reality of that which the testimony affirms. There is a growing diffidence in the truth of testimony, just as there is a growing diffidence in the effect of impulsion. This phenomenon is realized in the one process which is by all allowed to be strictly experimental—and there is therefore nothing in this same phenomenon, that bespeaks the other process not to have been strictly experimental also.

14. Let us now attend more narrowly to what the diffidence in both cases precisely is. The child has struck its spoon upon the table, and elicited a noise; and it expects to elicit the same noise by a stroke on all sorts of substances. It tries to obtain it, by a like application of the instrument in its hand on other smooth surfaces,

and is disappointed—as on the surface of water, on the surface of the sandy beach, or on the surface of the bed upon which it happens to be seated. There is a growing diffidence as to the effect of impulsion, in the general. There is a check upon the largeness and universality of this expectation. And with just as good reason as Dr. Campbell affirms that experience begets a growing diffidence in the evidence of testimony, may it be said, that experience begets a growing diffidence in the evidence of experience. The truth is, that experience does not appear, either to augment or diminish our *general* faith in the constancy of nature's sequences—though it may either augment or diminish our expectation of a given result in particular cases. The reason of this we have already endeavoured to make plain. We are born with the tendency to expect similar results in similar circumstances. But there is often an apparent without a real similarity, or a similarity in some circumstances though not a similarity in all, and these perhaps the essential circumstances. It is just because at the outset of observation, we overlook the differences, and are more impressed by the similarities of things, that in virtue of our native instinct we expect the same result in cases which have an apparent sameness, though they be really distinct from each other. The diffidence in question arises from nothing else than the correction which is subsequently laid on the indefiniteness and generality of this expectation. Experience, whose proper office is not to instruct us in the constancy of nature's sequences but to

inform us what the sequences actually are, enables us at length to discriminate, between those antecedents which have but a seeming and those which have an actual identity with each other. It teaches us, not to confound the things which differ—nor to expect that what we have found in one case, we shall always find in another though an apparently similar case. It is in virtue of the infantine tendency to confound and to assimilate the things which be distinct, that a child looks in the first instance for the same noise from the carpet that it had from the table—and it is the office of experience to limit and restrain this indefinite expectation. In regard to all those substances on which it made the trial and met with disappointment, experience begets a diffidence where before there was a confidence. But, in regard to the material on which it made its first experiment, it retains unabated confidence—or rather a confidence which grows and strengthens with every repetition of the experiment.* The child has lost the indiscriminate confidence which it had at the outset of its experimental career—just because experience has taught it to discriminate. It loses the *a priori*

* This growing confidence does not mark any increase in our expectation of a similar result from similar circumstances—for this expectation seems as strong in infancy as in manhood. It only marks an increasing assurance on our part of the circumstances in question being really as well as apparently the same. A thousand possibilities can be imagined which might have affected the sonorousness of wood, such as its temperature, the state of the atmosphere, and many other things which we need not specify. Every new experience of the wonted noise from a stroke assures us the more, that the result is not liable to be disturbed by the complication of any new or unobserved antecedents.—*See* the preceding Chapter.

confidence wherewith, at one time, it would have expected a noise in striking on wood or paper or the loose earth beneath its feet—but it does not lose its confident expectation of a noise by impulsion on the table, or, to speak more correctly, by impulsion upon wood. Experience teaches to distinguish the things which be distinct—and thus while it nullifies one set of expectations, it fortifies and builds up another set.*

15. And, it is just this, and nothing else, which takes place in testimony. The growing diffidence of a child, in the general power of testimony to indicate truth, is, in every respect, the same, with its growing diffidence, in the general power of impulsion to effect a noise. Having once experienced testimony to be true, it expects it to be true, in all time coming—as, having once elicited

* The following is an extract from Dugald Stewart in whose faintest hints there may so often be detected the germinating principles of a solid and profound yet withal cautious philosophy. —"It has been remarked by some eminent writers in this part of the island, that our expectation of the continuance of the laws of nature has a very close affinity to our faith in human testimony. The parallel might perhaps be carried without any over-refinement, a little farther than these writers have attempted; inasmuch as, in both cases, the instinctive principle is in the first case unlimited, and requires, for its correction and regulation, the lessons of subsequent experience. As the credulity of children is originally without bounds, and is afterwards gradually checked by the examples which they occasionally meet with of human falsehood, so, in the infancy of our knowledge, whatever objects or events present to our senses a strong resemblance to each other, dispose us, without any very accurate examination of the minute details by which they may be really discriminated, to conclude with eagerness, that the experiments and observations which we make with respect to one individual, may be safely extended to the whole class. It is experience alone that teaches us caution in such inferences, and subjects the natural principle to the discipline prescribed by the rules of induction."

a noise from a stroke, it expects a noise from a stroke, in all time coming. The first individual of whose testimony it had the observation, one may conceive to be actuated by the high principle of never deceiving a child; and the experience of his truth will be as uniform, as the experience of a noise by impulsion on a table. But the second individual may occasionally amuse himself with practising on the credulity of children—and in his testimony, that expectation of truth which was quite general and unexcepted at the first, will meet with disappointment. This is the whole amount of that diffidence in testimony which has been noticed by Dr. Campbell. There is a growing diffidence as to the truth of testimony in the gross—but no such growing diffidence as to the truth of particular species of testimony. The child learns to discriminate between A who never deceives, and B who does so occasionally; just as it learns to discriminate between the table that never misgives its noisy response to the stroke of a spoon, and the sand that never yields it. Experience has taught him a growing diffidence in the testimony of B—but so far from being its proper and exclusive office to beget a diffidence in testimony, the very same experience also teaches him a growing confidence in the testimony of A.

16. But the little learner will not only be taught by experience to discriminate between man and man—he will learn by experience to discriminate between the characteristics in general of a true, and that of a false testimony. Just as he is taught by experience to expect a noise, not from

the individual table only, but from every thing of the same material—so will he be tutored by experience to expect truth, not from the individual alone who never deceived him, but from every individual bearing the same marks of veracity. In the school of experience he will be exercised and make daily progress in the recognition of these marks; and become more intelligent, as he advances to manhood, in the natural signs of honesty, the manner and the tone and the whole expression of moral earnestness. He will learn to read the veracity of a witness in the air, and the distinctness, and the simplicity, and withal the circumstantial nature of his testimony. He will come to know how to derive a further confirmation from the state and circumstances of the reporter, from the condition of life he occupies and which may be such as makes him peculiarly alive to a sense of honour, from the utter absence of every inducement that could lead him to falsify, and from direct knowledge or information of the character that he bears and of the high-toned principle by which he is actuated. Experience may lead our young disciple to be diffident of some testimony but not of this testimony —of the testimony that is accompanied by an opposite set of characteristics, but not of the testimony whose characteristics we have now enumerated and which are specifically distinct from the other. He learns to expect truth or the want of it in man, from the marks of character which are presented to him—just as he learns to expect sonorousness or the want of it in body from the materials which are presented to him. It makes

no difference to our argument between the two cases, that the one subject is greatly more complex than the other—or that a greater number of particulars must be considered ere we ascertain the truthfulness of an individual man, than are necessary to be considered ere we ascertain the sonorousness of an individual body. There are antecedents and consequents in both processes—and the connexion between them is not the less real, that in the one process, the term which is presented to view is more difficult to be estimated than in the other process. The inference in both cases is alike experimental, notwithstanding. In looking to the material subject, we infer a sonorousness, on the observation of certain marks wherewith this quality has, in all past experience, stood associated. In looking to the moral subject, we infer a truthfulness, on the observation of certain marks, wherewith this quality has, in all past experience, stood associated. In the cases, where we do not meet with these marks, we have learned by experience to be diffident of testimony. But in the cases, where we do meet with these marks, we have learned at the very same school, even the school of experience, to be confident in testimony. When Dr. Campbell says, that experience teaches us to be diffident of testimony, we reply, that this wholly depends on the marks or characters, wherewith this testimony is associated. The same experience which teaches us to be diffident of the testimony that presents to notice the usual marks of falsehood, teaches us to be confident in the testimony that presents to notice the usual marks of

truth. Dr. Campbell affirms in the general, that experience begets a diffidence in testimony—we reply, not in all testimony—or, when it is testimony associated with the usual concomitants of truth, not in such testimony.

17. It is thus, that in opposition to Dr. Campbell, it may be contended, that our faith in testimony, does not rest on any principle different from our experience of its truth. If we have found, that in all past cases, a certain mode of relating an event, stands conjoined as the posterior term, with the reality of the event itself as the prior term, it is on this finding, and for aught we can see, on this alone, that we, in all time coming, ground our belief of any event, when related in the same mode, and amid the same circumstances. The diffidence which Dr. Campbell speaks of, only applies to the testimony which is delivered in a different way and under different circumstances. He has used the term testimony in its generality, when he should have distinguished between one mode of testimony and another—the one, bearing those distinct and specific marks which we have experienced to be indicative of truth—the other, bearing its own peculiar and distinct marks also, which are specifically diverse from the former, and which we have experienced to be indicative of falsehood. The same experience which begets a diffidence in the latter testimony, begets a confidence in the former—and, we see in this department, the working of the same uniform principle which obtains in all other departments of observation. It is just the principle which leads us to look for the same result in the same

circumstances, and for different results in different circumstances. The same experience which leads us to count on the sonorousness of wood one sort of matter, and the insonorousness of sand another sort of matter, leads us to count on the truth of one sort of testimony, and the falsehood of another sort of testimony. Dr. Campbell, by making our faith in testimony a distinct principle in our intellectual constitution from our faith in experience, hath mystified his argument, and so far weakened it. In testimony, as in every thing else, there is a diffidence in cases of an observed disjunction between the report and the event, and a confidence in the opposite cases of an observed conjunction—just as there is a diffidence in cases of an observed disjunction between a stroke and a noise, and a confidence in the opposite cases of an observed conjunction. The conjunction may, either in the one department or the other, be so unexcepted, as to advance the confidence into a certainty—a certainty different in kind, as relating to different objects, the moral or the physical—but a certainty equal in degree, and alike based upon the evidence of observation in both.

18. But even should, notwithstanding all that we have said, should Campbell's instinctive faith in testimony be sustained, this will not embarrass or impair our argument. It is not because it would p ejudice any refutation of ours, that we desire to set it aside—but because we hold ourselves to be independent of its aid. We do not think that the imagination of such an instinct helps ; but neither, do we think, that if admitted, it hinders the cause.

Although there were a peculiar mental instinct in our constitution, by which we felt and estimated the force of testimony, this does not hinder that, over and above, there may be a superiority of experimental evidence in its favour. This last is what we attempt to demonstrate—and that, too, even in the case of miracles, where Mr. Hume alleges the superiority of the experience against the testimony to be quite overwhelming. It is on this, and without having recourse to any peculiar instinct, that we would rest the strength of our argument. We think that our refutation has at least a greater obviousness to recommend it than that of Dr. Campbell's—and, on the other hand, should his be sustained by any as a valid refutation, this does not stand in the way of ours, but only affords two solutions instead of one for the difficulty in question. Yet, for our own part, we cannot help the impression, of a cause being injured by an obscure argument—even though, otherwise, it should be strongly and abundantly propped, by such arguments as are distinct and obvious to every understanding. And, we do think, that the allegation of a peculiar instinct for testimony, has wrought this very mischief in the controversy which now engages us—it being, in the first place, not very obvious in itself, and, secondly, though admitted as to its existence, furnishing no certain data by which to estimate the argumentative strength which should be assigned to it—so that, an experimental refutation seems still to be called for.

19. Certain it is, that in all arguments, the unnecessary multiplication of first principles ought

to be avoided. This has more than once been resorted to for the defence of religion—but not, we fear, without giving to its enemies the impression of a desperate cause. When Hume alleged our want of experience in the making of worlds, and would have built his Atheism on the assertion that the world was a singular effect, this was met by Reid and Stewart with their counter-affirmation, that the argument for design as indicated by the beneficial adaptations which our Universe exhibits was not grounded on experience at all—but that this design could be read immediately by the mind, through a distinct faculty of prompt and peculiar discernment which they were pleased to ascribe to it.* And, in like manner, when the same infidel philosopher alleged our want of experience for miracles, and would have built his Deism on the assertion, that our variable and defective experience for the truth of testimony could never so outweigh our uniform experience against the truth of miracles, as to make it possible that the credit of such extraordinary events should ever be established by the report of our fellow-men—this was met by Dr. Campbell with the assertion of an evidence in testimony apart from experience and independent of experience. It was certainly a signal honour done to the intellectual tactics of Mr. Hume, that for the protection of our cause, two new principles

* Perhaps it is the same cause in both instances—the rapidity of the mind's most familiar and more especially its inferential processes—which has led Reid and Stewart to the imagination of a peculiar instinct being concerned in our reasonings upon design, and Dr. Campbell to the like imagination of a peculiar mental instinct in our reasonings upon testimony.

had to be invented, wherewith to complicate still more, the philosophy of our mental constitution. Yet without such device, we think, that in both instances, the mischief of his argument might be neutralized—and that without the allegation of any mystic or peculiar tact whatever, both our belief of contrivance in Nature, and our belief of miracles from testimony might be made to rest on an experimental basis.

Section II.—*On the Power of the Evidence of Testimony.*

1. Mr. Hume's affirmation is, that we have never experienced a violation of the laws of Nature, but that we have often experienced the falsehood of testimony—and the argument which he grounds upon this affirmation is, that it is not in the power of testimony to establish the truth of such a violation —for this would be making the weaker experience prevail over the stronger, that which is unstable and uncertain prevail over that which is constant and immutable. To meet this, Dr. Campbell asserts, that our faith in testimony is a distinct principle from our faith in experience—that the two are not of the same species; and, therefore, cannot be compared together, as things which are the same in kind, but different in degree; or, that the one does not stand to the other in the relation of a whole to its part, and so, greater than its part—that, generically diverse, they, in fact, are independ-

ent and incommensurable—a supposition which, if true, might nullify the argument of Hume, yet mystify the whole subject, by leaving us in the dark, as to the relative value of two elements, now made so utterly disparate, and incapable of being referred to a common standard of measurement. It is already understood that we decline all participation in this principle of Dr. Campbell; and are willing to forego any benefit which may be imagined to have come by it to the controversy. We are willing to join issue on the assumption that our faith in testimony resolves itself into our faith in experience—and, whereas, in opposition to this, it has been argued by Dr. Campbell, that experience weakens our faith in testimony, instead of strengthening it—we have endeavoured to show, that it only weakens our faith in one sort of testimony, while it strengthens our faith in another. In the first instance, it may look adversely to our cause, that we should thus detach from it a consideration which has long been enlisted upon its side—but the same principle which serves to neutralize the friendly argument is, we think, the most effectual, wherewith to meet and to extinguish the hostile argument in this controversy. That force is not to be deprecated, either in military or intellectual tactics, which overthrows the adversary, even though to make room for it, an impotent auxiliary must be displaced from the field.

2. We think, then, that both the combatants have erred, by ascribing to testimony in the *general*, what should only have been ascribed to a certain sort of testimony, and which is in no way ascribable

to a certain other sort of it. The diffidence of testimony which Campbell affirms that experience teaches us, he leaves the reader to understand, as being a diffidence of all testimony—whereas, experience teaches us to distrust that testimony only which is presented to our notice with the usual characteristics of falsehood; and, on the other hand, to confide in the testimony which is presented to our notice with the reverse characteristics of truth. But Mr. Hume equally misses the same important distinction, when he affirms, that our experience in the truth of testimony is not so uniform as our experience in the constancy of Nature. We would reply, of *what testimony* is it, that our experience in its truth is not so uniform? We allow the assertion, in regard to that testimony, which bears upon it the marks of imposture. We further allow it of the testimony which, without any glaring marks of imposture, may have the gainly and prepossessing appearance of truth without its reality. But we cannot allow it of all testimony. We affirm that a testimony is conceivable—nay, that a testimony has often been given, having such marks and characteristics of truth accumulated upon it, and in such circumstances of unlikelihood or moral impossibility of its falsehood, that we can aver with the utmost confidence of such testimony, that it never has deceived us and never will. What Mr. Hume charges testimony *in the general* with, is very often realized in one species of testimony—not so often, in a second—less frequently in a third—much seldomer, in a fourth—with the exceeding rarity of an occurrence quite marvellous, in a fifth

—and never, in a sixth species of testimony. The subtle error of Mr. Hume's sophistry lies in this, that he makes all testimony responsible, for all the instances of falsehood—whereas he should make each species responsible only for its own instances. This needs well to be pondered—for, it is really here, that the whole plausibility of his argument lies. The sophistry retains its force, so long as we look to testimony in the gross—divide the testimony into its kinds, and the sophistry is dissipated.

3. In estimating the credit of a narration, our confidence in the things which are testified, is according to the kind of testimony. It makes no deduction from this confidence, to be told, that testimony has often deceived us. We reply, has this kind of testimony deceived us? It were thought a strange procedure in ordinary life, to lay upon one man of strict and undeviating honesty, any portion of the discredit, which is attached to another man who is habitually an impostor, or who has been detected even in one instance of fraud or falsehood. It were equally strange, to lay upon testimony, marked throughout by all the characters, and accompanied with all the pledges of integrity, the burden of that distrust which belongs to testimony, of specifically distinct, nay opposite characteristics. To recur to an illustration already given, from tide-gauges constructed on different principles, and so differing in their results, those of one species being more and of another less correct in their indications of high and low-water. That tide-gauges in general have deceived us, is surely no good reason, why we

should suspect the intimations of that sort of tide-gauge which never deceived us. It were not very discriminating to accumulate the burden of all the discredit which attaches to the worst kinds of the instrument, and lay it on the best kind of instrument—to collect into one sum, the failures of the one which has been found erroneous once in ten times, and of the other which has been found erroneous once in twenty times, and of the other which has been so found once in fifty times, and of the other once in a hundred—and, to make this sum go in deduction from the credit of that instrument which has never been found erroneous at all. This were most irrational with the testimony of these mechanical; and it were just equally irrational with the testimony of moral instruments. It is, however, the very irrationality into which Mr. Hume has fallen. He charges the general testimony of human witnesses with falsehood; and he makes this charge adhere, to all and to every sort of testimony. He holds it enough to set aside the credibility of reputed miracles, that we never experienced miracles to be true; but that we have often experienced testimony to be false. We ask, did he ever experience *this sort* of testimony to be false? He tells us that we are never deceived by trusting to the constancy of nature; but that testimony often deceives us. We ask, did *such* testimony ever deceive us? The way in which we would meet the general charge of Mr. Hume against testimony, is, by the separation of testimony into its kinds, and making each kind responsible for itself. Each kind has

its own special prognostics; and, as in all other cases of experience, each has its own corresponding result. It were strange to anticipate, from testimony having one set of prognostics, the result which belongs, to testimony having another set of prognostics. But this is just what Mr. Hume has done. He lays on the kind of testimony which is quite unexcepted, the burden of the exceptions, that belong to other and inferior kinds of testimony. He infers, that because certain species of testimony have deceived us—this species, the purest and the highest, may deceive us also. He does not sink the highest to the discredit of the lowest; but he, at least, lays upon it a deduction equal in amount to an average, taken from all sorts and all instances of testimony. He would lay upon the testimony that never once misgave, the guilt and the suspicion of all the misgivings that ever took place in testimony—and, because he is able to plead the constancy of nature, against the deceit or the uncertainty that belongs to certain classes of testimony—he thinks that he might plead it against that class of testimony, whose truth is unfaltering as are the ordinances of nature, as constant and immutable as any of her laws.

4. We hold, that the very principle, which serves to rectify the one combatant, serves also to refute the other. Indeed, we should not, perhaps, have insisted at such length, on the rectification of an error in Campbell, had it not been to familiarize ourselves with the very same reasoning, which best prepares us for the refutation of his adversary.

Had Dr. Campbell separated testimony into its different species, he would not have come forth, with an assertion of such sweeping generality, as that experience begets a diffidence in testimony—or, at least, he would have recognised a kind of testimony, our faith in which is strengthened by every day's experience. Had Mr. Hume made the same separation, he would not have come forth, with the alike general assertion, that our experience of the constancy of nature was stronger than our experience of the truth of testimony—or, at least, he would have recognised a certain kind of testimony, that as certainly indicated the event which it related, as any one term of an established sequence indicates the other term. He had no more right to make the deceitfulness of certain sorts of testimony bring a doubtfulness on others, than he has to make the insonorousness of certain material surfaces, the ground of a suspicion, that certain other surfaces, which had never failed to emit a sound on being struck, might nevertheless fail on the next experiment being tried with them. It were a strange inference, that because we expect no sonorousness from sand, which experience now tells us has not the property —therefore, we must not have the same confident experience as before, in the sonorousness of wood, which all experience tells us has the property. But it is not more strange, thus to apply the experience which we have had upon one surface of matter to all surfaces, than to apply the experience we have had of one species of testimony to all the species. We recognise a wooden

surface, and can distinguish it from one of sand, before that we have struck upon it; and have just the same ground, from experience, for anticipating a noise from the one, as for having no such expectation from the other. We recognise an honest testimony and can distinguish it from a suspicious one, without our immediate perception of the events that are related by them; and have the very same ground, from experience, for being sure of the one event, and doubtful of the other. All surfaces have a common resemblance, in that they are surfaces—yet, one may be so unlike to another, as to present a wholly distinct antecedent, and so give birth to a wholly distinct consequent. All testimonies bear a common resemblance, in that they are testimonies—yet, one may be so unlike to another, as to present the distinct term of a wholly distinct sequence, and so to warrant a different, nay an opposite inference in regard to the other term. While Mr. Hume has professed to deify experience, he has been mainly inattentive to her lessons—confounding the trains which she presents, though she presents them as wholly unlike to each other; losing sight, because of one general term that is expressive no doubt of a general similarity, of the specific dissimilarities that are included in it; and treating the whole matter so indiscriminately, as to look for one and the same consequent from different antecedents, or as to infer one and the same antecedent from different consequents.

5. Both in structure and in complexion, one sort of testimony may differ as much from another sort,

as one material substance differs, in structure and complexion, from another material substance. Of the two substances, each gives its own distinct evolutions; and of the two testimonies, each is attended with its own distinct result. We never think because of the want of sonorousness in one sort of substance, to lessen our confidence in the sonorousness of another sort of substance, which we have always found to possess this property. And neither ought the falsehood of one sort of testimony to lessen our confidence in the truth of another sort of testimony, which we have always found to be true. But not so with Mr. Hume. He makes the falsehood of the first operate, in the way of deduction, from our confidence in the second—just as if the experienced insonorousness of earth, should make us less sure than before, of the always experienced sonorousness of wood or of metal. In the generic resemblance of things, he overlooks the specific distinction which there is between them—and tries to confound or to hide the distinction under the generality of a common name.

6. By this habit, of confounding the things which are generically alike, however specifically different, we should traverse all the lessons of experience. The thing is imaginable, that there should be twelve species of birds, each having its own appropriate colour, and each its own special and appropriate note. If we only knew of an individual, belonging to some one or other of the species, that generally, it was a bird, but knew not to what species it belonged, we should be far from certainty, in regard to the specific kind of note

that was emitted by it—and it would be at the hazard of twelve to one against the assertion, if we ventured to affirm which of the twelve notes it was. But suppose that we were made further to know, not alone of the bird generally, but of its specific colour, this would advance our knowledge of the note which it gave forth to absolute certainty. After ascertaining it to be white or green or yellow, we should be at no loss for the corresponding note to each or any colour—and that, on the basis of our past experience, from which we learned, what the certain colour and certain note were, which stood invariably related to each other. But were Mr. Hume's argument on testimony consistently followed out, our uncertainty and diffidence in regard to the note would still adhere to us, even after the colour had been ascertained. On being told generally that a certain note had proceeded from a bird, he would blend all the specific varieties into one under this general appellation of the creature—and, overlooking the consideration, that to the particular colour which had been certified and made known to him, there belonged a particular note, he would still hesitate and be uncertain, because of the experience that other notes had proceeded from the genus. The proper reply is—but did not this note, and no other, always proceed from the species?—and the reply is equally a proper and effective one by which to overset his argument respecting testimony. We might imagine, too, twelve distinct species comprehended under the generic term testimony—from that kind of it which, by all experience is

characteristic of habitual falsehood, to that kind of it which, by all experience also, is characteristic of scrupulous and unveering honesty. It should not shake our confidence in the indications given forth by the last, that we had experienced something different from truth or opposite to truth in other sorts of testimony, which gave forth other indications. It is quite enough, that we never experienced aught but truth, in this sort of testimony—and we are not to lay upon it the servitude of all the falsehood, that has ever been detected in other sorts of it. The question, did we ever experience any other than a certain specific note from such a coloured bird, is in no way a more competent question—than, did we ever experience any other than truth in such a coloured or in such a circumstanced testimony? The moral certainty, in the one case, is just as great, as the physical certainty in the other. The two certainties relate to different objects, and so may be said to be of different kinds—but they are of equal degree in both.

7. Give me an individual with all the indications, both in his manner and conduct, of perfect moral honesty—let me recognise, whether in his oral or written testimony, a directness, and a simplicity, and a high tone of virtuousness, and withal a consistent while minutely circumstantial narrative, which all experience declares to be the signs and the characteristics of an upright testimony—let me understand that he forfeited every interest which is dear to nature, the countenance of friends, the affection of relatives, the comfort and security of

home, the blessings of domestic society, the distinctions as well as the pleasures of affluence, and lastly the enjoyment of life itself, in a resolute adherence to the avowals which he made, and which had brought upon him such a weight of persecution and odium—let me plainly see that there is nothing in the whole exhibition, which can either mark the falsehood of imposture or the frenzy of enthusiasm —let me know the subject-matter of his attestation to be some palpable fact, addressed to senses which could not be deceived, because, instead of a momentary glare, there was daily and repeated converse with a visible thing, and where both the sight and the touch lent to each other a mutual confirmation—let me further make the supposition that the statement in question was the resurrection of one from the dead, and who had been seen to expire by thousands of assembled witnesses.—If, it be objected that the truth of such a fact would imply a phenomenon wholly unexampled in the history of the species, our reply is, that the falsehood of such a testimony would imply a phenomenon equally unexampled in the history of the species—if it be said, that we have no experience of such an event turning out to be real, it may be said as truly, that we have no experience of such an averment turning out to be fallacious; and the one singularity, if it do not overmatch the other will at least neutralize it. There is nothing in the occasional falsehood of other and inferior grades of testimony, which can inflict discredit or disparagement upon this. It stands aloof from all the suspicion which attaches to these, because

exempted from all those similarities which make it questionable like these. The renovation of a lifeless corpse that had been laid in the tomb, but emerged from it again in the full possession of wonted activity and consciousness, is said to be a miracle--but equal, at least would be the miracle of either a falsehood or an error in him, who throughout the whole of a life devoted to the highest objects of philanthropy, made constant assertion of his having seen and handled and companied with the risen man—who maintained this testimony amid the terrors and the pains of martyrdom—and in the words of such an exclamation as " Lord Jesus receive my spirit," breathed it out as the last and the dying utterance of his faith.

8. In the course of our reading on this controversy, we have met with no work, which contains a full development of our argument, or where the author kept a steady hold of it, in the course of his reasoning. Yet, it is but fair to mention, that it must, in various degrees of dimness or of distinctness, have been present to the minds of several of the writers. The principle has been slightly noticed, but not insisted on—like a germ that did not germinate. It is well, that it has ever come, though but momentarily into their view—for this may be held as their recognition of its soundness, although, as if without an adequate sense of its importance and power, they have only bestowed on it a passing notice, instead of expanding it into a distinct and formal refutation.

8. The following are a few instances—Le Bas,

in his review of Penrose, presents us with the following abstract of an argument by the latter against what he terms Hume's "wretched fallacy." "The *general* improbability of miracles is undoubtedly very great; but this improbability, great as it is, can never accumulate to a certainty that all miracles are without exception false. The *general* probability that human testimony should be faithful and trustworthy may perhaps be slight; (or, at least, it may be allowed to be so for the purposes of this argument)—but this probability is capable, under some circumstances, of being converted into a moral certainty that in a particular instance the testimony is true. To argue from the general improbability of any class of occurrences to the universal certainty of their falsehood is manifestly illegitimate. But there is nothing illogical, in proceeding, even from a considerable probability of their falsehood in ordinary cases, to a positive certainty of their truth in extraordinary ones. We have here a distinction of immense importance. It looks very plausible to say that miracles are highly improbable, while the deceitfulness of human testimony is notorious; and on the strength of this vague and general comparison to reject all accounts of preternatural agency. But the above considerations effectually unmuffle this egregious sophism. They enable us to see that there may be cases in which even the miracle is not improbable, and in which the testimony is absolutely conclusive."

9. Dr. John Cook in his treatise on the Books of the New Testament, a work throughout of strenuous elaboration, has, in the following sentence

made a good beginning towards the refutation of Hume on the ground of experience: "Every man's testimony is to be tried by the peculiar circumstances in which it has been given, and not by the truth or falsehood which other men in different circumstances may have uttered." This should have made him independent of that instinctive propensity which Dr. Campbell ascribes to the human understanding —instead of which, he has recourse to it in the argument, and makes our belief in testimony an ultimate law of thought and distinct from experience. Both Penrose and he had hold of the principle which might have availed them for the vindication of testimony as an experimental evidence—a principle, which the former announces with greater distinctness in the quotation that follows, than in the one that has been already given from him. "Because there have been many false pretensions to miracles this authorizes a summary rejection of all such made in like circumstances, while we retain our confidence in those made in wholly dissimilar circumstances."

10. But nowhere have we met with a more distinct announcement of the true principle on this subject, than in the brief sentence by Dr. Whately taken from his masterly treatise on Logic—"It would be absurd to consider merely the *average chances* for the truth of *testimony in the abstract*, without inquiring *what* the testimony is, in the instance before us."

11. The reasoning of Mr. Hume may be cast into the following syllogism. Testimony has deceived us, but Nature is never known to have done so by the violation of her constancy: But

these violations of Nature's constancy termed miracles are only reported to us by testimony: Therefore these events never known to have happened, as being deponed to by an evidence that has often deceived us, must be rejected as untrue.—The fallacy of this syllogism is akin to that which is termed by Logicians the fallacy of composition—the middle term being used in the one premise distributively and in the other collectively. In the above syllogism the middle term or testimony is used collectively in one of the premises and distributively in another. It is true that testimony has deceived us—but this ought not to have been charged collectively upon all testimony; and it is also true that miracles, especially the miracles of the gospel, are reported to us by testimony, but if by a sort of testimony which never has deceived us, this at least countervails, if it do not overmatch, the improbability which attaches to the event in question because of its miraculous character. In this section of our argument we may be said to have but neutralized the hostile argument of Mr. Hume. In the following section we shall attempt to establish something more than a counterpoise. We shall attempt to establish a preponderance.

12. After what has been advanced, we regard it as unnecessary to advert to the views of Dr. Price who shares in the general sentiment of the philosophers of his period, in making our faith in testimony distinct from the faith of experience.

SECTION III.—*On the Power even of a single Testimony to accredit improbable or singular Events.*

1. WE hold ourselves to have abundantly proved, that even a single testimony may be of force, to countervail the improbability which is grounded on the singularity of the event that it records. In opposition to the statement, that no experience has furnished another instance of such an event being true, we might be able to affirm that no experience has furnished another instance of such a testimony being false. We can establish in this way, at least an equipoise, between the unlikelihood of a marvellous occurrence being real, and the unlikelihood of its supporting testimony being deceitful. But we require more than an equipoise between the event and its testimony. We require an overpassing force on the part of the latter, ere we reach the length of a positive evidence in behalf of the former. Now we believe that such an overpassing force may often belong to a single testimony—or, more properly perhaps, to the testimony of a single witness. Not that we need to avail ourselves of this consideration, in demonstrating the historic truth of the Christian miracles. The great strength, as we afterwards hope to prove, of the argument for them—lies in the combination and multitude of testimonies. Still, it is an interesting inquiry, in how far a separate testimony, or rather a separate witness may suffice for establishing the truth of a

miracle. We shall therefore bestow some consideration upon this—not so much, because of its being a curious speculation in itself, but because of certain analogies which it suggests between the evidence of testimony and the evidence of the senses in relation to miracles, and which serve for the further enforcement and illustration of our general argument.

2. To illustrate then this evidence of testimony by the evidence of the senses—a man, by a single act of perception, may be convinced of the truth of an event wholly unexampled in history, or of the reality of an object wholly unexampled in Nature. Let him be consciously awake and in possession of his right senses—and, his eye will give him the authoritative intimation of every thing within the range of his vision, however anomalous or unprecedented the thing may be—an information, on which he will place instant and implicit reliance. Should there be a low-water at the regular time of high-water, one glance at the shore would convince him of its reality. This breach of the customary successions of Nature would be verified, to him, by a single look—nor is it difficult to explain, why on the principles of experience, he should have full confidence in the truth of what is seen by him. The number of times in which, to his observation, a regular tide never has misgiven, is but an insignificant fraction, when compared with the number of times in which his eye never has deceived him. If he have taken note of a high and low-water a thousand times in his life, he has taken note of the eyes' informations and of their correctness, at least

a million times. This organ is not only his instrument of observation for the alternations of the sea—but an instrument of observation for all the visible phenomena that have ever come within the reach of his notice. He is verifying its informations, every minute of his waking history. He does not confine it to any one phenomenon, but is ever gathering new confidence in its accuracy, exercising it as he does on thousands of phenomena. An anomaly, in regard to some one phenomenon, might prove an exception to some regularity that has been observed by us hundreds of times before—yet, if this anomaly have been seen by us, it is instantly and firmly believed notwithstanding—else, we behoved to admit the still more violent and incredible anomaly of deceitful intimation by the eye, or an exception to a regularity that may have been observed many thousands of times before. It is like a tide-gauge that never failed in giving correct intimation; and so had an equal claim to be trusted for its accuracy, as the phenomenon of which it gave the intimation had to be expected for its regularity. Should the same tide-gauge be applied to other measurements besides, should we have observed the unfailing correctness wherewith it indicates the level of fluids ten times oftener than we have observed the regular variations of level in the waters of the ocean—then the strength of our belief in the testimony of the instrument should more than countervail, it should ten times overpass, the strength of our expectation in that regularity which we suppose to have been violated.

3. Now what is true of the testimony of a material

instrument may be alike true of the testimony of many a moral instrument. In our daily converse with society, we may be called upon, to have greatly more frequent observation of human testimony, than of many a distinct class of phenomena in the territory of nature. We may have much oftener observed that sequence, by which the reality of an event stands related to a faithful testimony, that we have observed the sequence which relates a high-water to a certain position of the moon in the heavens—and, on the ground of this arithmetical superiority, we may be justified in believing the one witness who depones to the reverse phenomenon of a low-water when there should have been a high. It is true that we are independent of this point—nor need we labour to establish it. It is not for the mere purpose of vindicating the actual historical evidence for the miracles of Christianity, that we thus insist on the power of one single and unsupported testimony. But it goes to complete and the more to accredit our theory, when we can demonstrate it to be in unison with the felt and undoubted phenomena of human belief. And we must often have been sensible of the unhesitating belief that we give even to an account of one witness, though he should depone to matters altogether unexpected and altogether new, different from or opposite to all former experience. Often, on the single word of one whom we knew to be an honest man, we should believe in any fact or object however special that he might tell us of—as of the tide that rises to the height of fifty feet in one part of the world, or of

the wind that blows from the same quarter all the year round in another part, or of stones that have fallen from upper regions of the atmosphere, or of results however unexpected in the processes of science—as when the strange and before unheard or unseen evolution of some one experiment is implicitly believed on the faith of but one testimony.

4. The same reason, then, which justifies our belief in the violation of a wonted sequence on the faith of one observation, may justify our belief in that violation on the faith of one testimony. The number of times in which we have experienced such a particular sequence may be greatly overpast by the number of times in which we have experienced the unfailing truth, either of such an observation in the one case, or of such a testimony in the other. And, it serves still farther to establish our vindication of the evidence of testimony, when it is considered that we do it on the same principle, by which we would vindicate the evidence of the senses. The truth is that instances can be alleged of one of our senses having deceived us, as well as of the testimony of others having deceived us. There can be alleged cases of false perception as well as of false testimony—and were Mr. Hume's argument consistently carried out, it might as well be contended, that we should not believe a miracle though we saw it, as that we should not believe a miracle however it may be reported to us. It might be said in the one case as in the other, that we have had no experience of miracles, but we have had experience of the senses being imposed upon. Our reply is the same to both. Testimony may have

misled you—but did ever *such* testimony? Perception too may have deluded you, but did ever such perception? You may have had experience a hundred times that such a sequence never once misgave. But you may have had the experience a thousand times that such an observation or such a testimony never did mislead you. In this case, and without having recourse to the supposition of there being any particular species of evidence, either in the senses or in testimony, we, on experimental ground alone, obtain an overpassing evidence from both.

5. But we are yet far from having made an adequate representation of the multiple force that lies in the evidence of the senses—and from which, we might still further illustrate the power that belongs to one testimony, or that belongs at least to the testimony of one witness. When by one look we observe an object which surprises us by its rarity, there may be a momentary suspicion on our part, of the accuracy of our own perceptions—and we look again. We must all be conscious how soon it is that we can satisfy ourselves in this way—and with what rapidity, in fact, the evidence accumulates by this repetition of notices, so as at length to become quite overpowering. The truth is, that, if one such look never deceived us above once in a thousand times, it carries in it the evidence of a thousand to one in favour of what is perceived by it; and the concurrent evidence of two such looks, equal to the product of both, amounts to no less than a million to one. In like manner the evidence of three distinct looks is justly

represented by the enormous proportion of a thousand millions to one—so that it is not to be marvelled at, if, in a portion of time almost imperceptible, we attain to absolute certainty regarding the reality of any object, however anomalous or unexpected that object may be. La Place in his treatise on the doctrine of probabilities admits this power of the senses to ascertain the truth even of events the most violently improbable. He puts the case of a hundred dice being thrown into the air, and of their all falling on the same faces. "If we had ourselves," he says, "been spectators of such an event, we would not believe our own eyes, till we had scrupulously examined all the circumstances, and assured ourselves that there was no trick nor deception. After such an examination, we would not hesitate to admit it notwithstanding its great improbability."* Yet La

* The following is the translation of a passage from La Place's "Essai Philosophique sur les Probabilites," p. 15. Paris, 1814.

"We should not give credit to the testimony of a man who affirmed that he had seen a hundred dice thrown in the air, and that they all fell on the same faces. If we ourselves had been spectators of this event we should not have believed our own eyes, till after having scrupulously examined all the circumstances, we had assured ourselves of there being no deception. But after this examination we should not hesitate to admit it, in spite of its extreme improbability, and no one would try to explain it by having recourse to the idea of an illusion produced through a reversion of the laws of vision. We ought to conclude that the probability of the constancy of the laws of Nature is superior to the improbability of the event in question having taken place—a probability which should carry it over that of the best attested historical facts. We may judge from this of the immense weight of testimony necessary to establish a suspension of the natural laws; and what an abuse it were to apply here the ordinary rules of criticism. All those who without this immense amount of testimony, rest what they advance on the recital of events contrary to these laws, weaken rather than augment that

Place while he thus admits that the evidence of the senses may be enhanced to a degree that is quite overbearing, would set aside, summarily and at once, the evidence of testimony—without con-

confidence which they seek to inspire—for such recitals make all the more probable the mistake or imposture of their authors. But that which lessens the belief of the enlightened, often confirms the faith of the vulgar; and we have already given the reason of this.

"There are some things so extraordinary that nothing can balance the improbability of them. But this, in virtue of a reigning opinion, can be weakened down to the point of appearing inferior to the probability of the supporting testimonies; and when this opinion undergoes a change, an absurd recital, admitted unanimously in the age which gave it birth, offers to succeeding ages but a new proof of the extreme influence of general opinion even on minds of the highest order."

The attentive reader will not fail to remark a certain perverse dexterity, by which in comparing the evidence of testimony with the evidence of the senses, La Place gives to the latter the benefit of that constancy which obtains in the laws of nature—while he keeps out of view that the former also has its nature, and its laws, and their constancy. He is right, in the extraordinary case which he has specified, in not believing his own eyes, till he has made a further and careful examination of the report which they have brought to him. But he is not right in not believing testimony at all hazards, and without bestowing on it too in any instance when it depones to an event as extraordinary the same careful examination. Though sight has sometimes deceived me, did ever such a sight deceive me?—is not a more competent question, than though testimony has often deceived me, did ever such a testimony? In passing from perception to testimony La Place makes a strange transmutation between the medium of proof and the thing to be proved, and so pronounces against the latter evidence and in favour of the former; but by a sort of reverse treatment, which of course lands him in a conclusion the reverse of what it ought to be. In estimating the evidence of perception, he attaches the consideration of nature's constancy to the medium of proof, and withholds it from the thing to be proved—and thus makes the certainty of the proof prevail over the improbability however violent of the thing to be proved. In estimating the evidence of testimony, he shifts the ground, or gratuitously attaches the consideration of nature's constancy to the thing to be proved, and withholds it from the medium of proof—and thus assigns to the thing to be proved an impossibility so

sidering whether that evidence too might not be enhanced in the very same way. He, in the instance now adduced, vindicates, and aright too, the authority of the senses—but without inquiring, whether he might not just so vindicate the authority of testimony. His reply, and it is a sound one, to the observation, that we have been deceived by the report of our own senses, would have been, that we never are deceived by the kind of report now given. He has not chosen to investigate, whether a like reply might not be made to the observation, that we have been deceived by the report of other men—which is, never by such a report as that wherein I am now resting my faith in some extraordinary event. But they are not the enemies of religion alone, who have been insensible to the force of such an application. It has been missed by its ablest defenders. For example this matter, as far as the evidence of the senses is concerned, has been exceedingly well argued by Mr. Somerville,*

absolute, that no proof from testimony however strong can possibly establish it. Why did he not recollect his own admission that the laws of the mental have as great a uniformity as those of the material world?—and if the study of these laws enables us to distinguish between the cases of true and false perception, it also enables us to distinguish between the cases of true and false testimony.

* We cannot too highly appreciate the merit of the contribution which this most respectable Scottish clergyman, the minister of a remote and retired country parish, has made to the christian argument. The following extract will serve as a specimen of his able pamphlet entitled "Remarks on an article in the Edinburgh Review in which the Doctrine of Hume on Miracles is maintained." It was first published in 1815. The article referred to is a review of La Place's Essay.

"I shall now examine the reason which he (La Place) assigns why we would believe our own eyes in case of our seeing a

in his acute and enlightened remarks on the Edinburgh review of La Place's book. The author had only to extend a similar remark to

hundred dice fall on the same faces, or a stone suspended in the air. It is, says he, our belief of the immutability of the laws of vision.

"This, like the former, is mere assertion, without an attempt towards proof; and, like the former, it must also be referred to general opinion. The question is, why do we believe, in such a wonderful instance, that our eyes have not deceived us? that we do not see *deuces* on the dice when they are really aces? La Place says, because we are persuaded of the immutability of the laws of vision. But the fact is, we are persuaded of no such matter, for we know that in many instances a man sees a single object as double; and in many cases, as of drunkenness or disease, he believes that he sees objects which have no existence at all. In any particular instance therefore, whether common or extraordinary, a man believes his eyes, because he is convinced by a rapid, and perhaps unobserved process of reasoning that the general laws of vision have not, in that particular instance, been changed or suspended. The process of reasoning on which he arrives at that conclusion is that on all other objects with which he has been long acquainted, his eyes are doing their office truly as usual. He looks up to the sky, and sees not two suns but one; and he observes all the people who were about him, not having two heads, or four eyes, but the usual number. Finding his eyes testifying truly in all these matters, he believes that they are doing the same, in the case of the dice or the stone. All this, like many other processes of reasoning may be so rapid as to be unobserved; but that this is really the ground of belief, and the process by which a person arrives at it will appear evident from this circumstance—that if any doubt were formally to arise in his own mind, or to be suggested by another, this is the very plan he would have recourse to in order to be sure what was the fact. He would not rest on the general ground, that any change in the laws of vision was impossible; but, knowing that such changes are not only possible but frequent, he would proceed to try his eyes upon other objects, or to examine the objects in question by his other senses, that he might know whether or not any such change had taken place in the laws of vision in the present instance. The credit, therefore, which we give to our own eyes, when we see any wonderful appearance, is not founded on our persuasion of the immutability of the laws of vision but on this, that in that instance we have abundant proof that the laws of vision are not changed."

We willingly accept the premises both of Hume and the Edinburgh reviewer, the latter of whom affirms, "that testimony

testimony—and then he might have felt himself quite independent of the supposition that our faith in it was a peculiar instinct of the understanding. The truth of perception, in fact, and the truth of testimony might both be advocated on the same grounds. It must be admitted that the senses have sometimes deceived us—but did ever the senses tried and exercised in this particular manner deceive us? And it must be admitted that testimony has often deceived us—but did ever testimony given in such a style and under such circumstances, or so thoroughly sifted and examined as this has been—did ever such testimony deceive us? Had there been aught in the sophistry of Hume, it would have disparaged the evidence of the senses as well as that of testimony. But both admit of being alike vindicated and that, by means of one and the same argument.

6. It is possible, that in a fit of insanity, my imagination may prevail over my senses—but, if now in the cool and conscious possession of all my faculties, such an exception is not applicable to the instance on hand. Or, it is possible, that by one rapid glance at an object, I may be thrown into

itself derives all its force from experience seems very certain." We cannot agree with him however when he tells us that—"The first author we believe who stated fairly the connexion between the evidence of testimony and the evidence of experience was Hume in his Essay on Miracles, a work full of deep thought and enlarged views; and, if we do not stretch the principle so far as to interfere with the truths of religion, abounding in maxims of great use in the conduct of life, as well as in the speculations of philosophy"—still less can we agree with him in the assertion respecting certain facts which he specifies, "that their improbability is so strong, that no testimony can prevail against it."

a momentary delusion respecting it—but, if it present the same aspect, after I have rubbed mine eyes, or tried them well on other familiar and well-known objects, and then looked again and again at the object in question—all suspicion is rightfully done away, and a fixed well warranted certainty succeeds in its room. It is thus, that the intimations, even of one sense, may be abundantly confirmed by a repetition of trials and exercises upon itself. Or additionally to this, the intimations of one sense may be verified by the concurrent intimations of another. If after all, for example, there should be still a lingering scepticism in the mind, the evidence of touch may be superadded to that of sight—and both senses may concur in deponing, that the appearance in question is indeed a substantial and not a spectral one. A prodigious augmentation might thus accrue to the evidence upon the whole. The truth is, if it be but once in a million of times, that such a sight as I have now gotten when taken singly has ever been deceived; and if it be also once in a million of times, that such a touch as I have now had, when taken singly, has ever been deceived—there is the enormous probability of a million of million of times on the side of that compound evidence which is founded on the agreement of both taken together. In all these ways, it will be observed, that one may have the utmost confidence in the reality of events, however unexpected or marvellous, when thus taken cognizance of by the senses—the confidence, in fact, of absolute certainty—or the certainty of what has

been termed ocular demonstration—so named, because though different in kind, held to be equal in degree to that of mathematical demonstration.

7. It is not because that practically we stand in need of it for the christian argument, but in justice to the philosophy of the subject, that we present this analogy between the case of testimony and the case of the senses. In like manner, as there are circumstances which enhance, and that to an indefinite extent, the evidence of the senses —so may the evidence of testimony be enhanced in the same way, and that, without calling in the aid of other testimony—for at present, though under no necessity to push the argument thus far, we are employed in demonstrating the way, in which accessions may be made to the force, that lies in one testimony, or rather, that lies in the testimony of one witness. In like manner, then, as to verify some strange information by the eye we try the goodness of that organ upon other objects of sight—so to verify some equally strange information brought us by a fellow-man, we may try his fitness as a medium of conveyance for other informations. It is thus that if we find an unexcepted honesty and an unexcepted accuracy of remembrance in his depositions as to all other things, this fortifies our confidence in his deposition as to the thing in question. And then, when satisfied in this way, that he is a faithful and competent informer, there does lie a strength in his repeated asseverations—just as when there is a consciousness of a wholesome state of the organs, strength is given to the evidence of the senses by the

repeated looks that we cast on any object which may be placed before us. Every time that he testifies anew the thing at issue, he makes another draught upon his memory by which to verify the correctness of his recital, and another draught upon his moral principles that would be exposed to violence by the recital of a falsehood. If we have already demonstrated of certain testimony, that the thing which it depones to is not more extraordinary than would be the falsehood of its own deposition, then by this one deposition an equipoise is gained between the truth of the matter in question and its falsehood. But surely the testimony gathers in strength, by its being repeated and persisted in —so as to make the supposition of its truth outweigh that of its falsehood. It is always, we should imagine, reckoned a favourable circumstance, that a witness perseveres in his story—and more especially if he do so, not only when put anew to the question by others—but should he, in coming forth with it spontaneously, prove how intimately the conviction of it is blended with the whole system and habitude of his thoughts—and still more should he, at every fresh utterance, incur a fresh danger and inconvenience, which he might easily have avoided. It is thus, that through the medium of but one acquaintance, of whose soundness and integrity I have the daily and accumulating evidence, I might come to the moral certainty even of a miracle, should he thus persevere both in vouching for it by a constant testimony, and in proceeding on it by the whole habit and regulation of his life. Such a witness as this may

be regarded as an organ through whom I receive the knowledge of what happens at a distance, just as a telescope or even an eye is the organ by which I become acquainted with the appearance and reality of distant objects. And, just as I gain an augmented confidence in the informations of the latter, when upon repeated trials I find the same consistent appearance of some visible phenomenon presented to my notice—so, in the repeated and consistent testimonies of the living organ, the human informer, there would seem at each time to be a new guarantee for the truth of his one averment.

8. But there is still another way in which a multiple force is given to the evidence of the senses. We have already explained how this is obtained by a number of distinct trials with the organ, as in the case of sight, by a repetition of looks for example.* But beside this way, a multiple force might be obtained, even at one look, by a number of distinct objects, seen at the same time, with the anomalous or extraordinary object in question; and each in perfect keeping or harmony therewith. This number of contemporaneous things, perceived along with some given occurrence, might overbear, with a superiority almost infinite, any improbability, founded on the rare or unprecedented nature of the occurrence itself. An anomalous low-water, for

* If the first look by which I have obtained my information has not deceived me more than once in a million times—and the second look be of the same kind and quality with the first, then by this simple repetition I obtain the probability of a million millions to one for the truth of the information. It is thus that by a series of looks, or which is tantamount to this, by a prolonged look I become satisfied in a time too short for being computed, that there is no deception.

example, would accredit itself, we have already affirmed, by a single look on the part of the observer—but if, in addition to this, he further, in the conscious possession of recollection and of all his faculties, recognised every well-known rock within the field of vision, that the sea, on retiring, leaves behind it, and the whole arrangement of those objects which had indelibly impressed themselves upon his remembrance—each object would be a distinct witness, for him, of the trueness of his perception. Even granting that he could be deceived, when observing exclusively, the now lower level of the water, he could not be deceived in his perception of the sand and the ground and the rocks, and all the familiar objects that were now uncovered by the retreat of the ocean. It would require, not one only, but a multitude of depositions, the falsehood of each of which were violently improbable, to impose on a spectator, thus attempting to verify the information of his own senses, by an examination of each separate object on the exposed and forsaken beach. The indefinitely large product of so many probabilities would outweigh the one improbability which was opposed to them—and which lay, in the mere singularity of the event. There would not be the hesitation of a single minute, in the way of a full assurance that what he saw in appearance he saw in reality—and there is not a visible phenomenon, whether on earth or in the heavens, though a violation of the undisturbed repose and stability of nature from time immemorial, that could not, on the strict principles of experimental calculation, be

verified in the same way. The appearance of written characters in the sky, the arrest or retrogression of the sun, the vacillation of the moon in an unclouded atmosphere so as to alternate along a given arch like the ball of a pendulum—are, not only possible to God, but may be made credible to man, with no other access to the knowledge of them than his actual senses, and no other grounds of judgment than the actual and received laws of evidence. The last phenomenon, in particular, might admit of many thousand verifications, and each of them as strong as the evidence of vision, upon each of the single objects of which the eye takes cognizance. For every vibration of the moon, there might be a corresponding vibration in the shadows which it casts of every terrestrial object. If mistake was possible, in the direct perception of the moon in the heavens, there might be innumerable guarantees for the accuracy thereof, in the perceived oscillation of the shadows upon earth. Let the observer but take notice, that, for every movement which he sees, or which he fancies to see, of the luminary above, there is a correct and corresponding movement of each shadow below—and, if conscious all the while that his senses are in a wholesome state, he, with almost the speed of lightning, will be convinced, that there is no fancy or illusion, in the matter. The imagination might be deceived in one thing—though that deception would be as utterly in violation of all past experience, as the reality of the phenomenon in question—but it would need the concurrence of a thousand as strong violations, or the product of a thousand as strong

improbabilities to deceive us in so many things, to deceive us in regard to the oscillation of all the shadows of which distinct observation might be taken, as to deceive us in regard to the one oscillation of the moon in the firmament. To admit the reality of the phenomenon, we have only to admit one exception to all experience. To reject its reality, we must admit the concurrence of a thousand exceptions to all experience.

9. We will not contend, that the testimony of a single witness admits of equal accessions to the force and intensity of its evidence, from a cause analogous to that which we have now been considering, in regard to the evidence of the senses. But surely, it does give augmented weight to the testimony of a witness, for some unprecedented fact or phenomenon, when all that he testifies beside, is either known to be true, or is in perfect keeping and consistency with the principal deposition. We may conceive him, for example, to avouch, on the evidence of his own senses, the resurrection of one from the dead. We have already affirmed, that such may be the peculiar characteristics of this testimony, and such the peculiar circumstances in which it was delivered, as to make its falsehood, though unsupported and alone, as improbable, as the event testified. And surely, it does superadd weight to this solitary deposition, when the same witness depones to other facts wherewith it harmonizes; and the truth of which, we either independently know, or have the same evidence for, that we have for the main fact, in the strong and unsuspicious appearances of perfect integrity on

the part of the witness. For example, when the resurrection is not only deponed to, but the despair and affliction of friends at the death and subsequent joy at the revival; the sudden enlargement of prosperity to that cause which, but for the alleged resurrection, would have been annihilated, as any other infant cause by the destruction of its founder; the acceptance of the testimony on the part of the many to whom it was addressed; and the variety of other things which entered into the narrative, and were so bound up as it were with the principal fact, that but for its truth they could have had no historical existence whatever—these all serve as confirmations of the single testimony in question. Each separate congruity affords a distinct guarantee against the narrator having been mistaken or deceived himself; while the manner of perfect undesignedness and simplicity, wherewith each is introduced, might afford a distinct evidence for his not being a deceiver. If apart then from such confirmations, the probability that lay in the testimony was just equal to the improbability that lay in the thing testified, then with the confirmations the former must outweigh the latter—and though we do not ground the establishment of our cause on the force that might thus be superadded to the testimony of a single witness, we feel, that had we not attempted to make the exhibition of it that we have done, we should have been keeping back part at least of the strength of our argument.

10. This power, however, of a single testimony or of a single witness to establish the truth of a miracle is, practically, and in reference to the

miracles of the New Testament, a minor consideration. For the accrediting of our religion, it is not necessary to insist upon it. But, if it can be explained, and without recourse to any peculiar instinct of the understanding, it serves to give completeness and consistency to our whole speculation. It might seem to warrant the imagination of such an instinct, that, in point of fact, the belief of a miracle might be felt, upon the authority even of a single informer; and, that with a certain number of credentials accumulated upon his person, the belief would be felt instantly and irreversibly. To be impressed rightly by such belief, it is not necessary, that we should be able to state the grounds of it. Still, however, the explanation of the actual phenomena of belief is, of itself, an interesting object, when it can be accomplished. We hold that, in this instance, an account can be given of the phenomena, without calling in the aid of any distinct or original principle in the constitution of the human mind—another example, out of the many, of that marvellous coincidence, which obtains, between the apparently intuitive judgments of the vulgar, and the calculations of scientific men.

11. This marvellous coincidence so well noticed by La Place in various parts of his work,* is not only one of his most profound, but one of the

* "It is this principle of Daniel Bernoulli's which makes the results of calculation to coincide with the indications of common sense, and which affords the means of appreciating with some exactness these otherwise vague indications."—*Theorie Analytique des Probabilités.* 1812, p. 440.

"We see by this essay, that the Theory of Probabilities is

most solid of those general observations in which he has indulged himself, and by which he relieves the more abstruse and scientific character both of his Analytic Theory, and of his Essay on Probabilities. It is not certainly the love of the marvellous, but strict and sound philosophy, which prompted him to make the observation—and it might have led him, we think, to assign another possible reason for the faith of the vulgar, in certain miracles at least, than the only one which he has been pleased to allege—even their love of the marvellous. Nothing can be truer than the harmony which obtains between their most rapid and confident intuitions on the one hand, and the results of strict calculation on the other. For example what can be more prompt, and at the same time more unfailingly accurate, than their identification of a personal acquaintance—proceeding doubtless on the felt unlikelihood of any other person realizing the very combination of lineaments and features by which he is ascertained and distinguished from the rest of the species. Should there be only one man in a thousand who possesses a deceiving resemblance in any one individual feature to the person in question, then it is by a very high power of a thousand, by a number amounting to many millions, that a calculator of probabilities would estimate the unlikelihood of any other person uniting all the same features and same peculiarities, or by which

nothing at bottom, but good sense reduced to calculation. It makes us estimate with exactness what just spirits feel by a sort of instinct, and without being able to render an account of it."—*Essai Philosophique sur les Probabilités.* 1814, p. 96.

he would estimate the chance bordering upon certainty that he was not deceived in the particular instance before him. It is by such a product, in fact, of separate unlikelihoods, that a man can identify on the instant, not merely his own friend, but his own hat, his own staff, his own umbrella. It is the number of independent characteristics which meet in any of these articles, that leads to so swift and sound a conclusion in regard to them; and precisely on the same principle, it is the number of the independent characteristics of truth meeting in one testimony which gives a power of conviction to it, that surmounts the most violent improbability. This surely is a possible explanation of the fact that so many enlightened minds, on a specific examination of the actual evidence for the miracles of Christianity, have deferred to them—long before Hume framed his metaphysical argument, or La Place revived it in a mathematical form. It is well however that it admits both of a metaphysical and mathematical refutation—the strength of which however becomes more palpable, when we pass as in the following section from the consideration of a single testimony, to that of a concurrence of testimonies.

Section IV.—*On the Power which lies in the Concurrence of distinct Testimonies.*

1. In throwing a pair of dice, the chance that aces shall cast up, is as one to thirty-six. There being

six sides on each of the dice, the chance that an ace shall cast up with the first of them is as one to six, and with the second is also one to six: and one to thirty-six expresses the probability that both shall concur—the chance of both conditions being realized at once, being just equal to the product of the separate chances into each other.

2. It is precisely at such a rate that the probability for the falsehood of any definition decreases, or the probability for its truth increases, with the concurrence of testimonies in its favour. If one of these testimonies be of such a kind, as, taking all the ostensible circumstances together, to have proved false once in six times, this single testimony gives the probability of six to one on the side of the thing deponed to. The addition of just such another testimony would make out the probability of thirty-six, and of a third two hundred and sixteen—or the probability on the whole, arising from testimony or the truth of any occurrence, may be represented, by the product of the separate probabilities for the truth of each individual testimony.

3. Of course, the testimonies must be supposed independent of each other. And then, we are not to wonder, at the speedy and perfect assurance which, by their means, we obtain of many events, although they should have no other evidence to rest upon. Such, after all, is the majority of truth to falsehood in the world—that, on the strength even of one of its every-day testimonies, we place implicit reliance on the truth of an event, whereof previously, we had no expectation. Of

how many of our familiars may it be said, that the chance is at least as a thousand to one, of his speaking truth rather than falsehood. Let two such concur, then, in any deposition—and, in as far as the probability of an event depends on the integrity of the witnesses, there are the chances of no less than a million to one in its favour. There must, then, be the inherent improbability of a million to one in the event itself, ere, with such a support from testimony, it can be dismissed as unworthy of credit. It will be seen, by what an immense superiority of evidence, on the addition of a third or a fourth or a certain number of witnesses, even this or indeed any definite improbability might be overcome—an evidence, which grows and gathers in rapid multiple progression by the addition of every new witness—provided always, that each depones on his own independent knowledge, and that they have no collusion with one another.

4. It is thus that, had we good enough separate testimonies, we might obtain by their conjunction, an evidence in behalf of a miracle that would outweigh to any amount the improbability which is inherent in the miracle itself. It is quite true that the establishment of a miracle requires stronger testimony than an ordinary event does—yet let that stronger testimony only be multiplied as much as the weaker, and the result would be, that the miracle should not only be as credible, but indefinitely and to any extent more credible, than the ordinary event. For example let the improbability of a miracle be estimated at a million, and

attested by three witnesses for each of whose separate integrities there is the probability of a million—then from the testimony of any one of these witnesses we obtain an equivalent or equipoise to the improbability of the miracle—leaving the product of the remaining two integrities, or a million of millions to represent the strength of our reason for believing the alleged miracle to be true. Should the ordinary event, on the other hand, have, in certain given circumstances, the improbability of a thousand attached to it, and be attested by three witnesses for each of whose integrities there is the probability of a thousand—then, as before, would the deposition of one of these witnesses neutralize the improbability of the event; but the joint testimony of the remaining two witnesses would only afford the probability of a thousand times a thousand, or of one million to represent the strength of our reason for believing the alleged event to be true. In other words, we should, in the respective circumstances now stated, have a million times better reason for believing in the truth of the miracle than in that of the ordinary event. Sceptics complain of the tax on their credulity, when they are called upon to put faith in miracles. Let them have a care, lest they, all the time, should, in reference to the miracles of the gospel, be resisting a claim upon their belief, many million-fold greater, than is possessed even by the commonest events in the history of past ages.

5. But, to obtain the requisite strength of evidence for overcoming the native improbability of a miracle,

it is not necessary that all the separate testimonies should be of the best and highest description. By one such testimony we might effect an equipoise. And by the addition of another, though of a very inferior sort, we might gain a preponderancy. One testimony of a superlative order, and whose falsehood would be miraculous, is of force enough, at least to countervail the improbability of an event whose truth would be miraculous. The superaddition of another testimony, of so low a character as to have deceived or misgiven once in six times, would of itself establish a proof of six times greater strength than the improbability that had to be overcome by it. It is thus that subsidiary, though inferior testimonies, are not without effect on the general result. They could, even of themselves overbalance the unlikelihood of a miracle—and when compounded, as they are in gospel history, with so many testimonies of the highest kind, the effect exceeds all conception, if not all computation. Nothing therefore can be juster than the reflection of Dr. Paley, when, in coming to a conclusive reckoning with Mr. Hume, he practically disposes of his argument by showing how it fails in a specific case.*

6. This deliverance of Paley, proceeded from the force of the evidence being felt, not from its being calculated. For in order to be felt and felt rightly too, or in some sort of general proportion to its strength, it is not necessary that the calculation should precede the feeling. There is nothing

* See Chap. I. § 20.

more familiar, than the instant formation of a shrewd and unerring judgment by men, who are wholly unable to state the grounds of it. With what confidence for example, will a man identify his acquaintance, among the many thousands of human beings who pass before him—yet who never has either reflected on the principles, or estimated the strength of that evidence on which his determination proceeds. He may never have computed, how indefinite is the variety of human countenances which can be formed by means of the possible changes in the combination of a few lineaments or features—and yet with what perfect accuracy as well as confidence will he recognise his own friend or his own hat or his own umbrella? He feels the evidence without knowing any thing of its philosophical vindication. He has the sense of it, though not the science of it—and this is enough, to carry him in safety through the manifold judgments he is called upon to make, in the practical business of life. It is thus that an unlettered workman, incapable though he be of all nice calculation, may, in these matters, have the nicest propriety of quick and instant discernment. Whether it be the circumstantial testimony of one witness or the multiple testimony of several, he cannot make the correct numerical estimate, but he can take on the correct impression of each new circumstance in the former case, or of each new deposition in the latter. It would not make him a better juryman though he were tutored in the philosophy of evidence—at least, it is the common sense of a jury, and not their philosophy, which

forms, in every instance when there is to be a judgment founded upon testimony, our best guarantee for the soundness of their decision. And as it is not necessary for their coming to a right practical judgment on any given case, that they should be able to comprehend the true philosophy on the subject of testimony, as little is it necessary that they should be able to confute a false philosophy on the same subject. The true philosophy does not aid them—the false does not impede or unsettle them. They judge as they would have done although no philosophy had been raised upon the question—and it is precisely thus, that the practical and home-bred sagacity of Dr. Paley meets with the sophistry of Hume.

9. Still, it is desirable, that it should be met on its own ground, and refuted in the terms of a general argument. And for this purpose, we revert with all confidence to the argument which we have already employed. When Mr. Hume affirms that testimony has often deceived us, our reply is that there is a species of testimony which never deceived us—and that when a testimony of this species is associated with a miracle, then there is an evidence for its reality, at least as strong as the counter-evidence which lies in the improbability of a miracle as such. After this we seek no aid, though we believe it to be had, from the principles adverted to in our last section—and by which we endeavoured to make it apparent, that even a single testimony might more than countervail the improbability of a singular event. The vast, the indefinite superiority of the evidence over the objection may be

made out in another way—by the composition of testimonies.

8. Having thus freed the argument in the abstract from the objection of Mr. Hume, we can now, with all the greater confidence, pass to the argument in the concrete, as founded on the actual state of the testimony for our religion. There, we behold an indefinitely greater strength of evidence than that afforded by the twelve men who make up the supposed case of Dr. Paley. Those ages of unquestionable martyrdom furnish us with thousands—and, in each of their dying testimonies, we behold a separate argument in favour of the christian miracles, as strong as the objection laid to their charge, on the score of dissimilarity to all example and experience. The argument, grounded on the combination of such testimonies, exceeds all computation—and, whatever strength there may be in the consideration, that never did such an event as the resurrection of our Saviour before occur in the annals of our species, it is overpassed by the more than million-fold strength of the reply, that never did there occur in the annals of our species, the falsehood of any one such testimony, as that whereof we can allege the consent of many thousands to the fact in question. We have not only the countless depositions of witnesses absolutely without exception—but these multiplied in force and effectiveness times without number, by witnesses of every inferior grade beneath them—men of probity and good sense, though not signalized by martyrdom—

authors who have left their written testimonies with every character both of simplicity and earnestness behind them—oral witnesses accredited by their sufferings or their readiness to suffer, and as numerous as were the individual members of all the christian churches in the days of the apostles—the testimony of a whole nation of enemies, and that signified in a way the most expressive, even by their silence on the subject of the christian miracles, those best vouchers for a faith which they detested—a like silence, virtually expressive of the same thing, among the hosts more numerous still, of provoked and persecuting Gentiles—the utter destitution of all credible testimony or credible proof against the cause, among its adversaries—while among its friends, a multitude of distinct and separate and wholly independent testimonies, each followed by a track of historic evidence and light that comes after it, and altogether composing a broad stream of effulgence that has borne down the gospel story on such characters of brightness as no distance of time can obscure, and as, in fact, the researches of each successive generation among the documents of antiquity only serve to irradiate the more. When Mr. Hume appeals to our experience of the falsehood of testimony, we ask, if ever on the face of the earth, there has been the experience of the falsehood of such testimony—or rather, when we think of the rapid progression by which it grows and multiplies with every new accession that is made to it, may we confidently affirm of its evidence, that no anomalies in nature

or history however unexampled, that no miracles however stupendous, can withstand it.

9. And Mr. Hume himself confesses of testimony, that it might in particular circumstances, have a force of evidence, sufficient to overpower his own argument. He imagines a universal darkness to have lasted for some days, in a by-gone age, and that had been the subject of a universal and uncontradicted tradition, down to the present times—that it was either incidentally noticed, or expressly deponed to, by contemporary authors—that, in every newly visited country, the same thing, handed down by transmission, remained the current and strong belief of all the inhabitants—that there was a perfect historical consistency, both in all the accounts of it at the time, and in the constant allusion made to it by succeeding authors. Mr. Hume, when *directly* judging of the event in question in the light of this evidence, even though the evidence of testimony, feels himself forced to admit the truth of it—a conclusion, altogether the opposite of that to which he is led by the *reflex* cognizance which he takes of the evidence itself. He cannot resist the admission of a most stupendous miracle, when supported by evidence so strong. In a word, he defers to our own principle, of the confidence due to *such* testimony—or, of not making one sort of testimony responsible for the errors or the falsities, which may be detected in other and altogether distinct sorts of testimony. This he admits in one case—and it is just by specific examination, that we

ascertain whether it may not be applicable to other cases also. Mr. Hume, without computation, and by the dictate of an instant and intuitive sagacity, gives his consent to the truth of a miracle, on the strength of a certain imagined testimony by which he conceives it to be supported. And many a sound believer, without computation, but in virtue of the same felt strength which lies in the real testimony for the miracles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, comes to a like firm, and, we maintain, a like warrantable conviction in their favour. We hold that, apart from computation, the belief in both instances is alike warrantable. But it is well, if the scientific or arithmetical proof can be superadded to the popular and instant persuasion—that so, the doctrine of probabilities which, in the hands of La Place, has been turned to the purposes of infidelity, might be converted into an auxiliary and voucher for the faith. It is desirable that the evidence for the miracles of the New Testament, were not only felt to be overbearing, but were exhibited in calculation to be so.

10. Before taking leave of Mr. Hume, let us endeavour to point out by what dexterity it was, that he managed to construct two plausible arguments—the first on the side of Atheism, the second on the side of Deism. The reader will recollect his atheistical argument grounded on the allegation of the world being a singular effect—and that we could not therefore reason to its cause, as we can to the cause of any other consequent whose antece-

dent we had ourselves observed on some former occasion. We met that argument by the counter-allegation, that though the world viewed in its totality and as a compound aggregate was singular, yet that it had a something in common with all those productions which were the effects of a designing cause, and that in respect of that thing it had no singularity. There is the adaptation of means to *an* end in the world, as distinct and discernible as there is such adaptation in a watch —and as it is adaptation, and that alone, in the watch, which indicates the watchmaker, so it is adaptation, and that alone, in the world, from which we infer a world-maker. Now we should like to notice a kind of reverse artifice to this in the construction of his other argument. In devising the first argument, he specialized the world from all kindred phenomena, notwithstanding the common property of adaptation which it had along with them. In devising the second argument, he confounded the first and highest sort of testimony with all the sorts, notwithstanding the special property by which it stands distinguished from the rest. In the first argument, he overlooks the common property, and specializes—in the second, he overlooks the special property and confounds. Whether it proceeded from design or the want of discrimination, we know not—but when he looked to the world and pronounced it singular, he made no mention of that in the world, which likens it to all other examples of mechanism. And when he looked to the best and highest species of testimony and pronounced it

fallacious, because under the general name of testimony instances of error and falsity were comprehended, he made no mention of that in the superior which distinguished it from all the other and inferior species of testimony. In the one case, where there is a common ingredient, yet he would specialize and separate from all. In the other case, where there is a special ingredient, yet he would confound and reduce it to a state of commonness with all. He calls the world singular, when the one thing which it has in common with others, is that on which may be founded the inference of a God. He calls the christian testimony common, when the one thing, which it has in contradistinction to many other testimonies, is that on which may be founded the inference of a revelation from God. He views the world in its singularity; and, when so doing, overlooks the common attribute which it possesses, and which constitutes the strength of the theistical argument. He views testimony in its generality; and, when so doing, overlooks the special property which it possesses, and which constitutes the strength of the christian argument. He chooses, in the first instance, to discriminate where there is no difference, or at least no difference of argumentative effect against the existence of a God. He chooses in the second instance to confound where there is a difference, and a difference of the utmost argumentative effect in favour of revelation. In both he hath violated, though by cross and contradictory methods, a principle of logic—and it needs but a logical rectification to restore both, to the argument for a God and to

the argument for Christianity, the strength which belongs to them.*

11. Hitherto, both these arguments have been

* The great name of a philosopher gives a destructive fascination to any dogmata he may utter, however rash or reckless they should be; and the defenders of Christianity therefore cannot be at too much pains to expose their real character. After Hume, we know of none who has converted the reputation he earned in the other sciences, into a more dangerous instrument of unfair and injurious offence to the science of theology, than La Place, the greatest mathematician and astronomer of the present century. In his two works on the Doctrine of Probabilities, he makes frequent discovery of his inclination to throw discredit on the pretensions both of natural and revealed religion. For example, in speaking of events and of their necessary dependence on the laws of nature, he tells us that—"In our ignorance of those links by which they are united with the entire system of the Universe, we ascribe them to *final causes* or to chance, according as they happen regularly or without apparent order; but these imaginary causes have successively given way with the limits of our knowledge, and disappear entirely before that sound philosophy which sees nothing in them but the expression of our ignorance of the true causes." They are such exhibitions of sentiment as these, which convince us of the vast importance of the distinction that we make, between the laws of matter and its dispositions. It seems clear from the above extract that La Place thinks the final cause for any event or class of events might be dispensed with, so soon as the discovery has been made of its efficient or physical cause. But physical causes as we have already explained account only for the events which take place in successive nature. They do not account for the existing relations which take place in contemporaneous nature. Now we can afford to give up the laws of matter; and rest our main argument for the being of a God, in as far as it can be gathered from the external world, upon its collocations.

The above extract evinces a hostile feeling towards the religion of nature. The following, as directed against the historical evidence of Christianity, evinces a no less hostile feeling towards the religion of the Bible. "Let us suppose a fact conveyed to us through twenty witnesses—the first conveying it to the second, the second to the third, and so on. Let us also suppose that the probability in favour of each witness is equal to nine-tenths—the probability of the fact will then be less than one-eighth—that is to say we shall have more chances than seven to one for its being false. We cannot better illustrate this diminution of probability, than by the extinction which takes place on the clearness of

disposed of in a way that we deem to be unsatisfactory. Each has been met by the assertion of a distinct and original principle in our intellectual constitution, that we believe had been previously unheard of—the one an instinctive perception of design apart from experience; the other, an instinctive faith in testimony equally apart from experience. This was certainly a great homage to the ingenuity of Hume on the part of his opponents—being, in

objects when several pieces of glass are interposed—a very small number of pieces sufficing to intercept the view of an object which a single piece would allow us to perceive in a distinct manner. Historians do not appear to have attended enough to this reduction in the probability of facts, when they are looked to across a great number of successive generations: several historical events now reported certain, would become at least doubtful, if submitted to this proof."—It is thus that by the glare of a false analogy, and having in it much at least of the semblance of science, the evidence for the miracles of the gospel might be represented as having undergone successive abstractions, till now attenuated to a shadow. Now what do we find to be the true state of the matter, when we abstain from bringing the vague analogies of one science or one subject into contact with another, to which it is in no way applicable? We at this moment enjoy a much greater sufficiency and splendour of historical evidence for the narratives of the gospel, than the christian world did three hundred years ago—from the discovery since that period of innumerable documents then unknown, and from the results of that laborious investigation by which they have been made to cast the light of a constantly increasing confirmation on each other. The geologists of the present day are in infinitely better circumstances for guessing at the past history of the globe, than the geologists of five hundred years back; and that, because they know infinitely more of those fossile characters and remains, which may be regarded as so many vestiges or inscriptions by the hand of nature, and because they can now read these records of hers with a better exercised discernment than before. In like manner the sacred eruditionists of the present day see much clearer and farther than their forefathers did into the records of Christianity; and since the invention of printing, the discoveries which are perpetually being made by them, invest the credentials of our faith with a lustre that always increases and never decays—after they have been consigned to the "immortal custody of the press."

fact, a full admission of the soundness of his reasoning on the then only existent data, that is, on all which had yet been known of the mental philosophy. Insomuch, that to stem his infidelity in both its branches, they had to discover what was before unknown; or rather, we think, to invent or imagine what was before unthought of. We hold both the cause of Natural Theology, and the cause of Christianity, to be independent of any such device—and that without complicating and mystifying the science of human nature, or having recourse to questionable novelties, there might, on the ground of experimental evidence alone, be raised a defence against each of his two sophistries, more effective than any which has been hitherto attempted, and certainly far more luminous.

12. One main advantage of such a refutation as we have attempted, is, that if effective, it goes conclusively to establish the experimental character of the evidence for the truth of Christianity—the only appropriate evidence for a religion of facts. We feel anxious for the removal of all from the christian side of the controversy which might obliterate that character—and we did feel an obliteration, so long as no other argument could be devised, by which to meet the sophistry of Hume, but such as recognised our faith in testimony to be distinct from our faith in experience. I hold it a most important demonstration, if it have really been made out, that the historical argument for the truth of Christianity has a purely inductive basis to rest upon; and that all the strength and glory which modern science has taken to herself, because of

her firm standing on the groundwork of observation, belongs, without mixture and without attenuation, to the faith which we profess. The characteristic thing which gives such vigorous and enduring staple to the philosophy of our age, is, that she now builds up all her doctrine on the findings of experience—and, no longer as before, on the fancies of a creative imagination. What we hold then a most desirable thing in argumenting the cause of Christianity, is to preserve this strictly experimental character to the reasonings on which her authority is founded—and we ever felt this subtlety of Hume, not as argued by him, but as redargued by his opponents, to be an obstacle in the way. It seemed a giving up of the authority of experience, to affirm of testimony, a character *sui generis*, and which owned no fellowship with the other—and we do feel, as if restored to comfort and to confidence, when, on the premises of our antagonist, that testimony is reducible to experience, we can nevertheless make good an overwhelming superiority of proof, for the miracles of Christ and his immediate followers. We now, in reference to our gospel and our faith, hold ourselves to be as firmly posted, as the disciples of modern science, on the evidence, the purely observational evidence of ascertained facts. It only remains, to follow the investigation consistently out, from the evidence of Christianity to the substance of Christianity—and to take our lessons from the volume of revelation, just as every sound experimental philosopher takes his from the volume of nature. They hold the authority of one natural observation to be of more

weight than the goodliest theory however plausible. And we, with our well accredited record, should hold one scriptural observation taken from its pages, to be of surpassing authority and value over all gratuitous imaginations of our own. The question of sound philosophy is, what findest thou? The question of sound theology is, what readest thou? There have been repeated attempts to put these two at variance—and to oppose the lessons taken from the works, to the lessons taken from the word of God. But there is the same reigning spirit that actuates the true disciple in each of these departments, and a harmony of principle in both.

BOOK II.

ON THE MIRACULOUS EVIDENCE FOR THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

On the Principles of Historical Evidence, and their Application to the Question of the Truth of Christianity.

1. Were a verbal communication to come to us from a person at a distance, there are two ways in which we might try to satisfy ourselves, that this was a true communication, and that there was no imposition in the affair. We might either sit in examination upon the substance of the message, and then, from what we knew of the person from whom it professed to come, judge whether it was probable that such a message would be sent by him; or we may sit in examination upon the credibility of the messengers.

2. It is evident, that in carrying on the first examination, we might be subject to very great uncertainty. The professed author of the communication in question may live at such a distance from us, that we may never have it in our power to verify his message by any personal conversation

with him. We may be so far ignorant of his character and designs, as to be unqualified to judge of the kind of communication that should proceed from him. To estimate aright the probable genuineness of the message from what we know of its author, would require an acquaintance with his plans, and views, and circumstances, of which we may not be in possession. We may bring the greatest degree of sagacity to this investigation; but then the highest sagacity is of no avail, when there is an insufficiency of data. Our ingenuity may be unbounded; but then we may want the materials. The principle which we assume may be untrue in itself, and, therefore, may be fallacious in its application.

3. Thus, we may derive very little light from our first argument. But there is still a second in reserve—the credibility of the messengers. We may be no judges of the kind of communication which is natural, or likely to proceed from a person with whom we are but imperfectly acquainted; but we may be very competent judges of the degree of faith that is to be reposed in the bearers of that communication. We may know and appreciate the natural signs of veracity. There is a tone and a manner characteristic of honesty, which may be both intelligible and convincing. There may be a concurrence of several messengers. There may be their substantial agreement. There may be the total want of any thing like concert or collusion among them. There may be their determined and unanimous perseverance, in spite of all the incredulity and all the opposition which

they meet with. The subject of the communication may be most unpalatable to us; and we may be so unreasonable, as to wreak our unpleasant feelings upon the bearers of it. In this way, they may not only have no earthly interest to deceive us, but have the strongest inducement possible to abstain from insisting upon that message which they were charged to deliver. Last of all, as the conclusive seal of their authenticity, they may all agree in giving us a watchword, which we previously knew could be given by none but their master; and which none but his messengers could ever obtain the possession of. In this way, unfruitful as all our efforts may have been upon the first subject of examination, we may derive from the second the most decisive evidence, that the message in question is a real message, and was actually transmitted to us by its professed author.

(4.) Now, this consideration applies in all its parts to a message from God. The argument for the truth of this message resolves itself into the same two topics of examination. We may sit in judgment upon the subject of the message; or we may sit in judgment upon the credibility of its bearers.

4. The first forms a part at least of that argument for the truth of the Christian religion, which comes under the head of its *internal evidences*. The substance of the message is neither more nor less, than that particular scheme of the divine economy which is revealed to us in the New Testament; and the point of inquiry is, whether this scheme be consistent with that knowledge of

God and his attributes which we are previously in possession of?

5. It is doubtful to many, whether any effectual argument can be founded upon this consideration, because they do not count themselves enough acquainted with the designs or character of the being from whom the message professes to have come. Were the author of the message some distant and unknown individual of our own species, we would scarcely be entitled to found an argument upon any comparison of ours, betwixt the import of the message and the character of the individual, even though we had our general experience of human nature to help us in the speculation. Now, of the invisible God, they affirm that we have no experience whatever. We are still further removed from all direct and personal observation of him or of his counsels. Whether we think of the eternity of his government, or the mighty range of its influence over the wide departments of nature and of providence, he stands at such a distance from us, as to make the management of his empire a subject well nigh inaccessible to all our faculties.

6. It is evident, however, that this does not apply to the second topic of examination. The bearers of the message were beings like ourselves; and we can apply our safe and certain experience of man to their conduct and their testimony. We may know too little of God, to found any confident argument *a priori* upon the coincidence which we conceive to exist between the subject of the message and our previous conceptions of its author. But we may know enough of man to pronounce upon

the credibility of the messengers. Had they the manner and physiognomy of honest men? Was their testimony resisted, and did they persevere in it? Had they any interest in fabricating the message; or did they suffer in consequence of this perseverance? Did they suffer to such a degree, as to constitute a satisfying pledge of their integrity? Was there more than one messenger, and did they agree as to the substance of that communication which they made to the world? Did they exhibit any special mark of their office as the messengers of God; such a mark as none but God could give, and none but his approved messengers could obtain the possession of? Was this mark the power of working miracles; and were these miracles so obviously addressed to the senses, as to leave no suspicion of deceit behind them? These are questions which we feel our competency to take up, and to decide upon. They lie within the legitimate boundaries of human observation; and upon the solution of these do we at present rest the question of the truth of the christian religion.

7. This, then, is the state of the question with those to whom the message was originally addressed. They had personal access to the messengers; and the evidences of their veracity lay before them. They were the eye and ear witnesses of those facts, which occurred at the commencement of the christian religion, and upon which its credibility rests. What met their observation must have been enough to satisfy them; but we live at the distance of nearly 2000 years, and is there enough to satisfy us? Those facts, which constitute the evidence for

Christianity, might have been credible and convincing to them, if they really saw them; but is there any way by which they can be rendered credible and convincing to us, who only read of them? What is the expedient by which the knowledge and belief of the men of other times can be transmitted to posterity? Can we distinguish between a corrupt and a faithful transmission? Have we evidence before us, by which we can ascertain what was the belief of those to whom the message was first communicated? And can the belief which existed in their minds be derived to ours, by our sitting in judgment upon the reasons which produced it?

8. The surest way in which the belief and knowledge of the men of former ages can be transmitted to their descendants, is through the medium of written testimony; and it is fortunate for us, that the records of the christian religion are not the only historical documents which have come down to us. A great variety of information has come down to us in this way; and a great part of that information is as firmly believed, and as confidently proceeded upon, as if the thing narrated had happened within the limits of our eye-sight. No man doubts the invasion of Britain by Julius Cæsar; and no man doubts, therefore, that a conviction of the truth of past events may be fairly produced in the mind by the instrumentality of a written memorial. This is the kind of evidence which is chiefly appealed to for the truth of ancient history; and it is counted satisfying evidence for all that part of it which is received and depended upon.

9. In laying before the reader, then, the evidence for the truth of Christianity, we do not call his mind to any singular or unprecedented exercise of its faculties. We call him to pronounce upon the credibility of written documents, which profess to have been published at a certain age, and by certain authors. The inquiry involves in it no principle which is not appealed to every day in questions of ordinary criticism. To sit in judgment on the credibility of a written document, is a frequent and familiar exercise of the understanding with literary men. It is fortunate for the human mind, when so interesting a question as its religious faith can be placed under the tribunal of such evidence as it is competent to pronounce upon. It was fortunate for those to whom Christianity (a professed communication from heaven) was first addressed, that they could decide upon the genuineness of the communication by such familiar and every-day principles, as the marks of truth or falsehood in the human bearers of that communication. And it is fortunate for us, that when, after that communication has assumed the form of a historical document, we can pronounce upon the degree of credit which should be attached to it, by the very same exercise of mind which we so confidently engage in, when sitting in examination upon the other historical documents that have come down to us from antiquital

10. If two historical documents possess equy. degrees of evidence, they should produce equal degrees of conviction. But if the object of the one be to establish some fact connected with our religious faith, while the object of the other is to estab-

lish some fact, about which we feel no other interest, than that general curiosity which is gratified by the solution of any question in literature, this difference in the object produces a difference of effect in the feelings and tendencies of the mind. It is impossible for the mind, while it inquires into the evidence of a christian document, to abstain from all reference to the important conclusion of the inquiry. And this will necessarily mingle its influence with the arguments which engage its attention. It may be of importance to attend to the peculiar feelings which are thus given to the investigation, and in how far they have affected the impression of the christian argument.

11. We know it to be the opinion of some, that in this way an undue advantage has been given to that argument. Instead of a pure question of truth, it has been made a question of sentiment, and the wishes of the heart have mingled with the exercises of the understanding. There is a class of men who may feel disposed to overrate its evidences, because they are anxious to give every support and stability to a system, which they conceive to be most intimately connected with the dearest hopes and wishes of humanity; because their imagination is carried away by the sublimity of its doctrines, or their heart engaged by that amiable morality which is so much calculated to improve and adorn the face of society.

12. Now, we are ready to admit, that as the object of the inquiry is not the character, but the truth of Christianity, the philosopher should be careful to protect his mind from the delusion of its

charms. He should separate the exercises of the understanding from the tendencies of the fancy or of the heart. He should be prepared to follow the light of evidence, though it may lead him to conclusions the most painful and melancholy. He should train his mind to all the hardihood of abstract and unfeeling intelligence. He should give up every thing to the supremacy of argument, and be able to renounce, without a sigh, all the tenderest prepossessions of infancy, the moment that truth demands of him the sacrifice. Let it be remembered, however, that while one species of prejudice operates in favour of Christianity, another prejudice operates against it. There is a class of men who are repelled from the investigation of its evidences, because in their minds Christianity is allied with the weakness of superstition; and they feel that they are descending, when they bring down their attention to a subject which engrosses so much respect and admiration from the vulgar.

13. It appears to us, that the peculiar feeling which the sacredness of the subject gives to the inquirer, is, upon the whole, unfavourable to the impression of the christian argument. Had the subject not been sacred, and had the same testimony been given to the facts that are connected with it, we are satisfied, that the history of Jesus, in the New Testament, would have been looked upon as the best supported by evidence of any history that has come down to us. It would assist us in appreciating the evidence for the truth of the gospel history, if we could conceive for a

moment, that Jesus, instead of being the founder of a new religion, had been merely the founder of a new school of philosophy, and that the different histories which have come down to us had merely represented him as an extraordinary person, who had rendered himself illustrious among his countrymen by the wisdom of his sayings, and the beneficence of his actions. We venture to say, that had this been the case, a tenth part of the testimony which has actually been given, would have been enough to satisfy us. Had it been a question of mere erudition, where neither a predilection in favour of a religion, nor an antipathy against it, could have impressed a bias in any one direction, the testimony, both in weight and in quantity, would have been looked upon as quite unexampled in the whole compass of ancient literature.

14. To form a fair estimate of the strength and decisiveness of the christian argument, we should, if possible, divest ourselves of all reference to religion, and view the truth of the gospel history, purely as a question of erudition. If, at the outset of the investigation, we have a prejudice against the christian religion, the effect is obvious; and, without any refinement of explanation, we see at once how such a prejudice must dispose us to annex suspicion and distrust to the testimony of the christian writers. But even when the prejudice is on the side of Christianity, the effect is unfavourable on a mind that is at all scrupulous about the rectitude of its opinions. In these circumstances, the mind gets suspicious of itself. It feels a predilection, and becomes apprehensive lest this

predilection may have disposed it to cherish a particular conclusion, independently of the evidences by which it is supported. Were it a mere speculative question, in which the interests of man, and the attachments of his heart, had no share, he would feel greater confidence in the result of his investigation. But it is difficult to separate the moral impressions of piety; and it is no less difficult to calculate their precise influence on the exercises of the understanding. In the complex sentiment of attachment and conviction, which he annexes to the christian religion, he finds it difficult to say, how much is due to the tendencies of the heart, and how much is due to the pure and unmingled influence of argument. His very anxiety for the truth disposes him to overrate the circumstances which give a bias to his understanding; and, through the whole process of the inquiry, he feels a suspicion and an embarrassment, which he would not have felt, had it been a question of ordinary erudition.

15. The same suspicion which he attaches to himself, he will be ready to attach to all whom he conceives to be in similar circumstances. Now, every author who writes in defence of Christianity is supposed to be a Christian; and this, in spite of every argument to the contrary, has the actual effect of weakening the impression of his testimony. The suspicion affects, in a more remarkable degree, the testimony of the first writers on the side of Christianity. In opposition to it, you have, no doubt, to allege the circumstances under which the testimony was given; the tone of

sincerity which runs through the performance of the author; the concurrence of other testimonies; the persecutions which were sustained in adhering to them, and which can be accounted for on no other principle, than the power of conscience and conviction; and the utter impossibility of imposing a false testimony on the world, had they even been disposed to do it. Still there is a lurking suspicion, which often survives all this strength of argument, and which it is difficult to get rid of, even after it has been demonstrated to be completely unreasonable. He is a Christian. He is one of the party. Am I an infidel? I persist in distrusting the testimony. Am I a Christian? I rejoice in the strength of it; but this very joy becomes matter of suspicion to a scrupulous inquirer. He feels something more than the concurrence of his belief in the testimony of the writer. He catches the infection of his piety and his moral sentiments. In addition to the acquiescence of the understanding, there is a *con amore* feeling, both in himself and in his author, which he had rather be without, because he finds it difficult to compute the precise amount of its influence; and the consideration of this restrains him from that clear and decided conclusion, which he would infallibly have landed in, had it been purely a secular investigation.

16. There is something in the very sacredness of the subject, which intimidates the understanding, and restrains it from making the same firm and confident application of its faculties, which it would have felt itself perfectly warranted to do, had it been a question of ordinary history. Had

the Apostles been the disciples of some eminent philosopher, and the Fathers of the Church their immediate successors in the office of presiding over the discipline and instruction of the numerous schools which they had established, this would have given a secular complexion to the argument, which, we think, would have been more satisfying to the mind, and have impressed upon it a closer and more familiar conviction of the history in question. We should have immediately brought it into comparison with the history of other philosophers, and could not have failed to recognise, that, in minuteness of information, in weight and quantity of evidence, in the concurrence of numerous and independent testimonies, and in the total absence of every circumstance that should dispose us to annex suspicion to the account which lay before us, it far surpassed any thing that had come down to us from antiquity. It so happens, however, that instead of being the history of a philosopher, it is the history of a prophet. The veneration we annex to the sacredness of such a character, mingles with our belief in the truth of his history. From a question of simple truth, it becomes a question in which the heart is interested; and the subject from that moment assumes a certain holiness and mystery, which veils the strength of the argument, and takes off from that familiar and intimate conviction which we annex to the far less authenticated histories of profane authors.

17. It may be further observed, that every part of the christian argument has been made to un-

dergo a most severe scrutiny. The same degree of evidence which, in questions of ordinary history, commands the easy and universal acquiescence of every inquirer, has, in the subject before us, been taken most thoroughly to pieces, and pursued, both by friends and enemies, into all its ramifications. The effect of this is unquestionable. The genuineness and authenticity of the profane historian are admitted upon much inferior evidence to what we can adduce for the different pieces which make up the New Testament: And why? Because the evidence has been hitherto thought sufficient, and the genuineness and authenticity have never been questioned. Not so with the gospel history. Though its evidence is precisely the same in kind, and vastly superior in degree, to the evidence for the history of the profane writer, its evidence has been questioned, and the very circumstance of its being questioned has annexed a suspicion to it. At all points of the question, there has been a struggle and a controversy. Every ignorant objection, and every rash and petulant observation, has been taken up and commented upon by the defenders of Christianity. There has at last been so much said about it, that a general feeling of insecurity is apt to accompany the whole investigation. There has been so much fighting, that Christianity is now looked upon as debateable ground. Other books, where the evidence is much inferior, but which have had the advantage of never being questioned, are received as of established authority. It is striking to observe the perfect confidence with which an infidel will quote a pas-

sage from an ancient historian. He, perhaps, does not overrate the credit due to him. But present him with a tabellated and comparative view of all the evidences that can be adduced for the Gospel of Matthew, and any profane historian whom he chooses to fix upon, and let each distinct evidence be discussed upon no other principle than the ordinary and approved principles of criticism, we assure him that the sacred history would far outweigh the profane in the number and value of its testimonies.

18. In illustration of the above remarks, we can refer to the experience of those who have attended to this examination. We ask them to recollect the satisfaction which they felt, when they came to those parts of the examination, where the argument assumes a secular complexion. Let us take the testimony of Tacitus for an example. He asserts the execution of our Saviour in the reign of Tiberius, and under the procuratorship of Pilate; the temporary check which this gave to his religion; its revival, and the progress it had made, not only over Judea, but to the city of Rome. Now all this is attested in the Annals of Tacitus. But it is also attested in a far more direct and circumstantial manner in the annals of another author, in a book entitled the *History of the Acts of the Apostles by the Evangelist Luke.* Both of these performances carry, on the very face of them, the appearance of unsuspicious and well-authenticated documents. But there are several circumstances, in which the testimony of Luke possesses a decided advantage over the testimony of Tacitus. He

was the companion of these very Apostles. He was an eye-witness to many of the events recorded by him. He had the advantage over the Roman historian in time, and in place, and in personal knowledge of many of the circumstances in his history. The genuineness of his publication, too, and the time of its appearance, are far better established, and by precisely that kind of argument which is held decisive in every other question of erudition. Besides all this, we have the testimony of at least five of the christian Fathers, all of whom had the same, or a greater advantage in point of time than Tacitus, and who had a much nearer and readier access to original sources of information. Now, how comes it that the testimony of Tacitus, a distant and later historian, should yield such delight and satisfaction to the inquirer, while all the antecedent testimony (which, by every principle of approved criticism, is much stronger than the other) should produce an impression that is comparatively languid and ineffectual? It is owing, in a great measure, to the principle to which we have already alluded. There is a sacredness annexed to the subject, so long as it is under the pen of Fathers and Evangelists, and this very sacredness takes away from the freedom and confidence of the argument. The moment that it is taken up by a profane author, the spell which held the understanding in some degree of restraint is dissipated. We now tread on the more familiar ground of ordinary history; and the evidence for the truth of the Gospel appears more assimilated to that evidence, which brings home to our con-

viction the particulars of the Greek and Roman story.

19. To say that Tacitus was upon this subject a disinterested historian, is not enough to explain the preference which you give to his testimony. There is no subject in which the triumph of the Christian argument is more conspicuous, than the moral qualifications which give credit to the testimony of its witnesses. We have every possible evidence, that there could be neither mistake nor falsehood in their testimony; a much greater quantity of evidence, indeed, than can actually be produced to establish the credibility of any other historian. Now, all we ask is, that where an exception to the veracity of any historian is removed, you restore him to that degree of credit and influence which he ought to have possessed, had no such exception been made. In no case has an exception to the credibility of an author been more triumphantly removed, than in the case of the early Christian writers; and yet, as a proof that there really exists some such delusion as we have been labouring to demonstrate, though our eyes are perfectly open to the integrity of the Christian witnesses, there is still a disposition to give the preference to the secular historian. When Tacitus is placed by the side of the Evangelist Luke, even after the decisive argument which establishes the credit of the latter historian has convinced the understanding, there remains a tendency in the mind to annex a confidence to the account of the Roman writer, which is altogether disproportioned to the relative merits of his testimony.

20. Let us suppose, for the sake of farther illustration, that Tacitus had included some more particulars in his testimony, and that, in addition to the execution of our Saviour, he had asserted, in round and unqualified terms, that this said Christus had risen from the dead, and was seen alive by some hundreds of his acquaintances. Even this would not have silenced altogether the cavils of enemies: but it would have reclaimed many an infidel; been exulted in by many a sincere Christian; and made to occupy a foremost place in many a book upon the evidences of our religion. Are we to forget all the while, that we are in actual possession of much stronger testimony? that we have the concurrence of eight or ten contemporary authors, most of whom had actually seen Christ after the great event of his resurrection? that the veracity of these authors, and the genuineness of their respective publications, are established on grounds much stronger than have ever been alleged in behalf of Tacitus, or any ancient author? Whence this unaccountable preference of Tacitus? Upon every received principle of criticism, we are bound to annex greater confidence to the testimony of the Apostles. It is vain to recur to the imputation of its being an interested testimony. This the apologists for Christianity undertake to disprove, and actually have disproved it, and that by a much greater quantity of evidence than would be held perfectly decisive in a question of common history. If, after this, there should remain any lurking sentiment of diffidence or suspicion, it is entirely resolvable into some such principle as I

have already alluded to. It is to be treated as a mere feeling,—a delusion which should not be admitted to have any influence on the convictions of the understanding.

21. The principle which we have been attempting to expose, is found, in fact, to run through every part of the argument, and to accompany the inquirer through all the branches of the investigation. The genuineness of the different books of the New Testament forms a very important inquiry, wherein the object of the christian apologist is to prove, that they were really written by their professed authors. In proof of this, there is an uninterrupted series of testimony from the days of the Apostles; and it was not to be expected, that a point so isoteric to the christian society could have attracted the attention of profane authors, till the religion of Jesus, by its progress in the world, had rendered itself conspicuous. It is not, then, till about eighty years after the publication of the different pieces, that we meet with the testimony of Celsus, an avowed enemy to Christianity, and who asserts, upon the strength of its general notoriety, that the historical parts of the New Testament were written by the disciples of our Saviour. This is very decisive evidence. But how does it happen, that it should throw a clearer gleam of light and satisfaction over the mind of the inquirer, than he had yet experienced in the whole train of his investigation? Whence that disposition to underrate the antecedent testimony of the christian writers? Talk not of theirs being an interested testimony; for, in point of fact, the

same disposition operates, after reason is convinced that the suspicion is totally unfounded. What we contend for is, that this indifference to the testimony of the christian writers implies a dereliction of principles, which we apply with the utmost confidence to all similar inquiries.

22. The effects of this same principle are perfectly discernible in the writings of even our most judicious apologists. We offer no reflection against the assiduous Lardner, who, in his Credibility of the Gospel History, presents us with a collection of testimonies which should make every Christian proud of his religion. In his evidence for the genuineness of the different pieces which make up the New Testament, he begins with the oldest of the Fathers, some of whom were the intimate companions of the original writers. According to our view of the matter, he should have dated the commencement of his argument from a higher point, and begun with the testimonies of these original writers to one another. In the second Epistle of Peter, there is a distinct reference made to the writings of Paul; and in the Acts of the Apostles, there is a reference made to one of the four Gospels. Had Peter, instead of being an Apostle, ranked only with the Fathers of the Church, and had his epistle not been admitted into the canon of Scripture, this testimony of his would have had a place in the catalogue, and been counted peculiarly valuable, both for its precision and its antiquity. There is certainly nothing in the estimation he enjoyed, or in the circumstances of his epistle being bound up with the other books of the New Testament, which

ought to impair the credit of his testimony. But, in effect, his testimony does make a weaker impression on the mind, than a similar testimony from Barnabas, or Clement, or Polycarp. It certainly ought not to do it; and there is a delusion in the preference that is thus given to the later writers. It is, in fact, another example of the principle which we have been so often insisting upon. What profane authors are in reference to christian authors at large, the Fathers of the Church are in reference to the original writers of the New Testament. In contradiction to every approved principle, we prefer the distant and the later testimony, to the testimony of writers, who carry as much evidence and legitimate authority along with them, and who only differ from others in being nearer the original sources of information. We neglect and undervalue the evidence which the New Testament itself furnishes, and rest the whole of the argument upon the external and superinduced testimony of subsequent authors.

13. A great deal of all this is owing to the manner in which the defence of Christianity has been conducted by its friends and supporters. They have given too much into the suspicions of the opposite party. They have yielded their minds to the infection of their scepticism, and maintained, through the whole process, a caution and a delicacy which they often carry to a degree that is excessive; and by which, in fact, they have done injustice to their own arguments. Some of them begin with the testimony of Tacitus as a first principle, and pursue the investigation upwards;

as if the evidence that we collect from the annals of the Roman historian were stronger than that of the christian writers, who flourished nearer the scene of the investigation, and whose credibility can be established on grounds which are altogether independent of his testimony. In this way, they come at last to the credibility of the New Testament writers, but by a lengthened and circuitous procedure. The reader feels as if the argument were diluted at every step in the process of derivation, and his faith in the gospel history is much weaker than his faith in histories that are far less authenticated. Bring Tacitus and the New Testament to an immediate comparison, and subject them both to the touchstone of ordinary and received principles, and it will be found that the latter leaves the former out of sight in all the marks, and characters, and evidences, of an authentic history. The truth of the Gospel stands on a much firmer and more independent footing, than many of its defenders would dare to give us any conception of. They want that boldness of argument which the merits of the question entitle them to assume. They ought to maintain a more decided front to their adversaries, and tell them, that, in the New Testament itself—in the concurrence of its numerous, and distinct, and independent authors—in the uncontradicted authority which it has maintained from the earliest times of the church—in the total inability of the bitterest adversaries of our religion to impeach its credibility—in the genuine characters of honesty and fairness which it carries on the very face of it; that in these, and in every

thing else, which can give validity to the written history of past times, there is a weight and a splendour of evidence, which the testimony of Tacitus cannot confirm, and which the absence of that testimony could not have diminished.

24. If it were necessary, in a court of justice, to ascertain the circumstances of a certain transaction, which happened in a particular neighbourhood, the obvious expedient would be to examine the agents and the eye-witnesses of that transaction. If six or eight concurred in giving the same testimony—if there was no appearance of collusion amongst them—if they had the manner and aspect of creditable men—above all, if this testimony were made public, and not a single individual, from the numerous spectators of the transaction alluded to, stept forward to falsify it, then, we apprehend, the proof would be looked upon as complete. Other witnesses might be summoned from a distance to give in their testimony, not of what they saw, but of what they heard upon the subject; but their concurrence, though a happy enough circumstance, would never be looked upon as any material addition to the evidence already brought forward. Another court of justice might be held in a distant country; and, years after the death of the original witnesses, it might have occasion to verify the same transaction, and for this purpose might call in the only evidence which it was capable of collecting—the testimony of men who lived after the transaction in question, and at a great distance from the place where it happened. There would be no hesitation, in ordinary cases, about the relative value of the two

testimonies; and the records of the first court would be appealed to by posterity as by far the more valuable document, and far more decisive of the point in controversy. Now, what we complain of is, that in the instance before us this principle is reversed. The report of hearsay witnesses is held in higher estimation than the report of the original agents and spectators. The most implicit credit is given to the testimony of the distant and later historians; and the testimony of the original witnesses is received with as much distrust, as if they carried the marks of villany and imposture upon their foreheads. The authenticity of the first record can be established by a much greater weight and variety of evidence, than the authenticity of the second. Yet all the suspicion that we feel upon this subject annexes to the former; and the Apostles and Evangelists, with every evidence in their favour which it is in the power of testimony to furnish, are, in fact, degraded from the place which they ought to occupy among the accredited historians of past times.

25. The above observations may help to prepare the inquirer for forming a just and impartial estimate of the merits of the christian testimony. His great object should be to guard against every bias of the understanding. The general idea is, that a predilection in favour of Christianity may lead him to overrate the argument. We believe, that if every unfair tendency of the mind could be subjected to a rigorous computation, it would be found, that the combined operation of them all has the effect of impressing a bias in a contrary direction.

All we wish for is, that the arguments which are held decisive in other historical questions, should not be looked upon as nugatory when applied to the investigation of those facts which are connected with the truth and establishment of the christian religion; that every prepossession should be swept away, and room left for the understanding, to expatiate without fear, and without encumbrance.

CHAPTER II.

On the Genuineness of the different Books of the New Testament.

1. THERE is a confusion in the language of writers on the Evidences of Christianity, in regard to the terms *genuineness* and *authenticity* and *integrity*, as applied to the books of the New Testament, which it were desirable should be rectified and adjusted. At all events a consistent phraseology should be maintained upon these subjects. Doubtless this is an affair of definition rather than of doctrine. But it saves the misconception of doctrines, when, after that definitions are settled, they should, though not altogether invulnerable to verbal criticism, be held as settled conclusively.

2. Even Dr. Paley is not free of all ambiguity in the use of these terms. In one chapter of his Evidences, he evidently understands by the genuineness of any book in the New Testament, that it is the production of the author whose name

it bears. In another chapter, he seems to regard this as one of the particulars belonging to the authenticity of the book, and not to its genuineness. It is an awkward thing that there should be any interchange of meaning between these two terms; and more especially, as some of our best authors have come forth with formal definitions of them which are contradictory to each other. According to Dr. Hill the authenticity of a book signifies that it is the production of its professed author; and its genuineness signifies the incorruptness of its received text. In this he is followed by Dr. John Cook, author of an inquiry published some years ago into the books of the New Testament. The English writers in general, however, notwithstanding the vacillation on this matter now instanced in Dr. Paley, understand by the genuineness of the book its being the production of the author whose name it bears, and by its authenticity the truth of its contents and informations. For example Horne does so; and that very estimable author Isaac Taylor, who has contributed so much of late to the illustration of the historical evidences.*

* "Now, in treating of this part of our argument, the first, and a most material, observation upon the subject is, that, such was the situation of the authors to whom the four gospels were ascribed, that, if any one of the four gospels be *genuine*, it is sufficient for our purpose. The received author of the first was an original apostle and emissary of the religion. The received author of the second was an inhabitant of Jerusalem at the time, to whose house the apostles were wont to resort, and himself an attendant upon one of the most eminent of that number. The received author of the third was a stated companion and fellow traveller of the most active of all the teachers of the religion, and in the course of his travels frequently

3. This confusion in the application of the term *authentic*, might be accounted for in this way: Authentic with all the writers is tantamount to true. But this characteristic of trueness has been applied by them to different things. The first class, in their application of the term authentic, meant to express that the book is true—the second class meant the same term to convey that this book contains a true history. The former had respect to the history of the book; the latter to the history in the book. The most remarkable circumstance in the history of the book is the origination of it—and, more especially, the author who framed it; and so then, by the term authentic, the former would signify that the author to whom it was commonly ascribed was its real author. But the latter, looking to the history in the book, and not to the external history of the book itself, would signify by the term authentic that the history which it contained was a real history. On this subject we feel inclined to abandon that sense of the term

in the society of the original apostles. The received author of the fourth, as well as of the first, was one of these apostles."—*Paley's Evidence*, Part I. chap. viii.

In his next chapter, "Of the *Authenticity* of the Scriptures," he proceeds to state among other things, "the high probability there is that they actually come from the persons whose names they bear."

Taylor in his "Transmission of ancient Books to modern Times," p. 7, says, "Satisfactory evidence in support of the first proposition (the genuineness of the books) will prove that the works in question are not *forgeries*; and of the second (their authenticity) will show that they are not *fictions*."

Both the book now quoted, and another by the same author on "The Process of historical Proof," are most important accessions to the literature of the argumentative evidence for Christianity. Few writers have exhibited in such bold relief the strength and solidity of the cause.

in which we have been educated, and to side with the two authors whom we have last referred to; and shall henceforth employ the term authentic as applied to any book, not to denote that it has been ascribed to its proper author, but to denote the truth and authority of its informations.

4. The term *genuineness* then is left to denote the former circumstance in regard to any book—that is, its being the production of the author whose name it bears. And it will not be difficult to perceive, how the meaning of this term may be still farther extended. If the book being genuine is contrasted, as is done by Taylor, with the book being a forgery, then, doubtless, it is as much a forgery by a wrong name upon its title page, as a letter is a forgery by a wrong name for its subscription. But there is another way in which a book may at length be transformed into a forgery. It may be mutilated or interpolated or made to undergo so many changes, whether by additions or erasures, as virtually to be a different book from what it was, when it came forth originally from the hands of its author. In both cases there is a forgery—in the first case, by means of a wrong man for the book; and in the second case by means of a wrong book for the man. And the meaning of the word genuine has been so far extended by some, as to make it expressive of freeness from both sorts of forgery—in the first place, denoting that the supposed author of the book was the real one; and, in the second place, that the book was free of all those larger corruptions, that proceed from the art and the wilfulness of man. When

the meaning of the term genuineness is thus far extended, then the third and last term which we proposed to explain, that is *integrity*, denotes the freedom of the book from those smaller corruptions, which accumulate in the progress of ages, by the mistake and the carelessness of transcribers.

5. After more deliberation on this matter than perhaps some may think was at all necessary, we feel disposed to settle it in this way. We would understand by the *authenticity* of the book the truth of its informations; by its *genuineness* that it is the production of the author whose name it bears; and by its *integrity* the incorruptness of its received copies, or the agreement in the main between the book as it exists at present and the book as it came from the hands of its author.

6. The argument for the truth of the different facts recorded in the gospel history, resolves itself into four parts. In the first, it shall be our object to prove, that the different pieces which make up the New Testament, were written by the authors whose names they bear, and in the age which is commonly assigned to them. In the second, we shall exhibit the internal marks of truth and honesty which may be gathered from the compositions themselves. In the third, we shall press upon the reader the known situation and history of the authors, as satisfying proofs of the veracity with which they delivered themselves. And in the fourth, we shall lay before them the additional and subsequent testimonies, by which the narrative of the original writers is supported.

7. In every point of the investigation, we shall

meet with examples of the principle which we have already alluded to. We have said, that if two distinct inquiries be set on foot, where the object of the one is to settle some point of sacred history, and the object of the other is to settle some point of profane history, the mind acquiesces in a much smaller quantity of evidence in the latter case than it does in the former. If this be right, (and to a certain degree it undoubtedly is,) then it is incumbent on the defender of Christianity to bring forward a greater quantity of evidence than would be deemed sufficient in a question of common literature, and to demand the acquiescence of his reader upon the strength of this superior evidence. If it be not right beyond a certain degree, and if there be a tendency in the mind to carry it beyond that degree, then this tendency is founded upon a delusion, and it is well that the reader should be apprized of its existence, that he may protect himself from its influence. The superior quantity of evidence which we can bring forward, will, in this case, all go to augment the positive effect upon his convictions; and he will rejoice to perceive, that he is far safer in believing what has been handed down to him of the history of Jesus Christ, and the doctrine of his Apostles, than in believing what he has never doubted—the history of Alexander, and the doctrine of Socrates. Could all the marks of veracity, and the list of subsequent testimonies, be exhibited to the eye of the reader in parallel columns, it would enable him, at one glance, to form a complete estimate. We shall have occasion to call his attention to this so often, that we may appear to many

of our readers to have expatiated upon our introductory principle to a degree that is tiresome and unnecessary. We conceive, however, that it is the best and most perspicuous way of putting the argument.

8. I. The different pieces which make up the New Testament, were written by the authors whose names they bear, and at the time which is commonly assigned to them.

9. After the long slumber of the middle ages, the curiosity of the human mind was awakened, and felt its attention powerfully directed to those old writings which have survived the waste of so many centuries. It were a curious speculation to ascertain the precise quantity of evidence which lay in the information of these old documents. And it may help us in our estimate, first to suppose, that, in the researches of that period, there was only one composition found which professed to be a narrative of past times. A number of circumstances can be assigned, which might give a certain degree of probability to the information even of this solitary and unsupported document. There is first, the general consideration, that the principle upon which a man feels himself induced to write a true history, is of more frequent and powerful operation, than the principle upon which a man feels himself induced to offer a false or a disguised representation of facts to the world. This affords a general probability on the side of the document in question being a true narrative; and there may be some particulars connected with the appearance of the performance itself, which might strengthen

this probability. We may not be able to discover in the story itself any inducement which the man could have in publishing it, if it were mainly and substantially false. We might see an expression of honesty, which it is in the power of written language, as well as of spoken language, to convey. We might see that there was nothing monstrous or improbable in the narrative itself. And, without enumerating every particular calculated to give it the impression of truth, we may, in the progress of our inquiries, have ascertained, that copies of this manuscript were to be found in many places, and in different parts of the world, proving, by the evidence of its diffusion, the general esteem in which it was held by the readers of past ages. This gives us the testimony of these readers to the value of the performance; and, as we are supposing it a history, and not a work of imagination, it could only be valued on the principle of the information which was laid before them being true. In this way, a solitary document, transmitted to us from a remote antiquity, might gain credit in the world, though it had been lost sight of for many ages, and only brought to light by the revival of a literary spirit, which had lain dormant during a long period of history.

10. We can farther suppose, that, in the progress of these researches, another manuscript was discovered, having the same characters, and possessing the same separate and original marks of truth with the former. If they both touched upon the same period of history, and gave testimony to the same events, it is plain that a stronger

evidence for the truth of these events would be afforded, than what it was in the power of either of the testimonies, taken separately, to supply. The separate circumstances which gave a distinct credibility to each of the testimonies, are added together, and give a so much higher credibility to those points of information upon which they deliver a common testimony. This is the case when the testimonies carry in them the appearance of being independent of one another. And even when the one is derived from the other, it still affords an accession to the evidence; because the author of the subsequent testimony gives us the distinct assertion, that he believed in the truth of the original testimony.

11. The evidence may be strengthened still farther, by the accession of a third manuscript, and a third testimony. All the separate circumstances which confer credibility upon any one document, even though it stands alone and unsupported by any other, combine themselves into a much stronger body of evidence, when we have obtained the concurrence of several. If, even in the case of a single narrative, a probability lies on the side of its being true, from the multitude and diffusion of copies, and from the air of truth and honesty discernible in the composition itself, the probability is heightened by the coincidence of several narratives, all of them possessing the same claims upon our belief. If it be improbable that one should be written for the purpose of imposing a falsehood upon the world, it is still more improbable that many should be written, all

of them conspiring to the same perverse and unnatural object. No one can doubt, at least, that of the multitude of written testimonies which have come down to us, the true must greatly preponderate over the false; and that the deceitful principle, though it exists sometimes, could never operate to such an extent, as to carry any great or general imposition in the face of all the documents which are before us. The supposition must be extended much farther than we have yet carried it, before we reach the degree of evidence and of testimony which, on many points of ancient history, we are at this moment in actual possession of. Many documents have been collected, professing to be written at different times, and by men of different countries. In this way, a great body of ancient literature has been formed, from which we can collect many points of evidence, too tedious to enumerate. Do we find the express concurrence of several authors to the same piece of history? Do we find, what is still more impressive, events formally announced in one narrative, not told over again, but implied and proceeded upon as true in another? Do we find the succession of history, through a series of ages, supported in a way that is natural and consistent? Do we find those compositions which profess a higher antiquity, appealed to by those which profess a lower? These, and a number of other points, which meet every scholar who betakes himself to the actual investigation, give a most warm and living character of reality to the history of past times. There is a perversity of mind which may

resist all this. There is no end to the fancies of scepticism. We may plead in vain the number of written testimonies, their artless coincidence, and the perfect undesignedness of manner by which they often supply the circumstances that serve both to guide and satisfy the inquirer, and to throw light and support upon one another. The infidel will still have something, behind which he can intrench himself; and his last supposition, monstrous and unnatural as it is, may be, that the whole of written history is a laborious fabrication, sustained for many ages, and concurred in by many individuals, with no other purpose than to enjoy the anticipated blunders of the men of future times, whom they had combined with so much dexterity to bewilder and lead astray.

12. If it were possible to summon up to the presence of the mind, the whole mass of spoken testimony, it would be found, that what was false bore a very small proportion to what was true. For many obvious reasons, the proportion of the false to the true must be also small in written testimony. Yet instances of falsehood occur in both; and the actual ability to separate the false from the true in written history, proves that historical evidence has its principles and its probabilities to go upon. There may be the natural signs of dishonesty. There may be the wildness and improbability of the narrative. There may be a total want of agreement on the part of other documents. There may be the silence of every author for ages after the pretended date of the manuscript in question. There may be all these,

in sufficient abundance, to convict the manuscript of forgery and falsehood. This has actually been done in several instances. The skill and discernment of the human mind, upon the subject of historical evidence, have been improved by the exercise. The few cases in which sentence of condemnation has been given, are so many testimonies to the competency of the tribunal which has sat in judgment over them, and give a stability to their verdict, when any document is approved of. It is a peculiar subject, and the men who stand at a distance from it may multiply their suspicions and their scepticism at pleasure; but no intelligent man ever entered into the details, without feeling the most familiar and satisfying conviction of that credit and confidence which it is in the power of historical evidence to bestow.

13. Now, to apply this to the object of our present division, which is to ascertain the age of the document, and the person who is the author of it. There are points of information which may be collected from the performance itself. They may be found in the body of the composition, or they may be more formally announced in the title-page; and every time that the book is referred to by its title, or the name of the author and age of the publication are announced in any other document that has come down to us, these points of information receive additional proof from the testimony of subsequent writers.

14. The New Testament is bound up in one volume, but we would be underrating its evidence if we regarded it only as one testimony, and that the

truth of the facts recorded in it rested upon the testimony of one historian. It is not one publication, but a collection of several publications, which are ascribed to different authors, and made their first appearance in different parts of the world. To fix the date of their appearance, it is necessary to institute a separate inquiry for each publication; and it is the unexcepted testimony of all subsequent writers, that two of the gospels, and several of the epistles, were written by the immediate disciples of our Saviour, and published in their lifetime. Celsus, an enemy of the Christian faith, refers to the affairs of Jesus, as written by his disciples. He never thinks of disputing the fact; and from the extracts, which he makes for the purpose of criticism, there can be no doubt in the mind of the reader, that it is one or other of the four gospels to which he refers. The single testimony of Celsus may be considered as decisive of the fact, that the story of Jesus and of his life was actually written by his disciples. Celsus writes about a hundred years after the alleged time of the publication of this story; but that it was written by the companions of this Jesus, is a fact which he never thinks of disputing. He takes it up upon the strength of its general notoriety, and the whole history of that period furnishes nothing that can attach any doubt or suspicion to this circumstance. Referring to a principle already taken notice of, had it been the history of a philosopher instead of a prophet, its authenticity would have been admitted without any formal testimony to that effect. It would have been admitted, so to speak, upon the mere

existence of the title-page, combined with this circumstance, that the whole course of history or tradition does not furnish us with a single fact, leading us to believe that the correctness of this title-page was ever questioned. It would have been admitted, not because it was asserted by subsequent writers, but because they made no assertion upon the subject; because they never thought of converting it into a matter of discussion; and because their occasional references to the book in question would be looked upon as carrying in them a tacit acknowledgment, that it was the very same book which it professed to be at the present day. The distinct assertion of Celsus, that the pieces in question were written by the companions of Jesus, though even at the distance of a hundred years, is an argument in favour of their authenticity, which cannot be alleged for many of the most esteemed compositions of antiquity. It is the addition of a formal testimony to that kind of general evidence, which is founded upon the tacit or implied concurrence of subsequent writers, and which is held to be perfectly decisive in similar cases.

15. Had the pieces, which make up the New Testament, been the only documents of past times, the mere existence of a pretension to such an age, and to such an author, resting on their own information, would have been sustained as a certain degree of evidence, that the real age and the real author had been assigned to them. But we have the testimony of subsequent authors to the same effect; and it is to be remarked, that it is by far

the most crowded, and the most closely sustained series of testimonies, of which we have any example in the whole field of ancient history. When we assigned the testimony of Celsus, it is not to be supposed that this is the very first which occurs after the days of the Apostles. The blank of a hundred years betwixt the publication of the original story and the publication of Celsus, is filled up by antecedent testimonies, which, in all fairness, should be counted more decisive of the point in question. They are the testimonies of christian writers, and, in as far as a nearer opportunity of obtaining correct information is concerned, they should be held more valuable than the testimony of Celsus. These references are of three kinds :—*First*, In some cases, their reference to the books of the New Testament is made in the form of an express quotation, and the author particularly named. *Secondly*, In other cases, the quotation is made without reference to the particular author, and ushered in by the general words, "*As it is written.*" And *thirdly*, There are innumerable allusions to the different parts of the New Testament, scattered over all the writings of the earlier Fathers. In this last case there is no express citation; but we have the sentiment, the turn of expression, the very words of the New Testament, repeated so often, and by such a number of different writers, as to leave no doubt upon the mind, that they were copied from one common original, which was at that period held in high reverence and estimation. In pursuing the train of references, we do not meet with a

single chasm from the days of the original writers. Not to repeat what we have already made some allusions to, the testimonies of the original writers to one another, we proceed to assert, that some of the Fathers, whose writings have come down to us, were the companions of the Apostles, and are even named in the books of the New Testament. St. Clement, bishop of Rome, is, with the concurrence of all ancient authors, the same whom Paul mentions in his epistle to the Philippians. In his epistle to the church of Corinth, which was written in the name of the whole church of Rome, he refers to the first epistle of Paul to the former church. "Take into your hands the epistle of the blessed Paul, the apostle." He then makes a quotation which is to be found in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. Could Clement have done this to the Corinthians themselves, had no such epistle been in existence? And is not this an undoubted testimony, not merely from the mouth of Clement, but on the part of the churches both of Rome and Corinth, to the authenticity of such an epistle? There are in this same epistle of Clement, several quotations of the second kind, which confirm the existence of some other books of the New Testament; and a multitude of allusions or references of the third kind, to the writings of the Evangelists, the Acts of the Apostles, and a great many of those epistles which have been admitted into the New Testament. We have similar testimonies from some more of the Fathers, who lived and conversed with Jesus Christ. Besides many references of the second

and third kind, we have also other instances of the same kind of testimony which Clement gave to St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, than which nothing can be conceived more indisputable. Ignatius, writing to the church of Ephesus, takes notice of St. Paul's epistle to that church; and Polycarp, an immediate disciple of the Apostles, makes the same express reference to St. Paul's epistle to the Philippians, in a letter addressed to that people. In carrying our attention down from the apostolical Fathers, we follow an uninterrupted series of testimonies to the authenticity of the canonical scriptures. They get more numerous and circumstantial as we proceed—a thing to be expected from the progress of Christianity, and the greater multitude of writers who came forward in its defence and illustration.

16. In pursuing the series of writers from the days of the Apostles down to about 150 years after the publication of the pieces which make up the New Testament, we come to Tertullian, of whom Lardner says, "that there are perhaps more and longer quotations of the small volume of the New Testament in this one christian author, than of all the works of Cicero, though of so uncommon excellence for thought and style, in the writers of all characters for several ages."

17. We feel ourselves exposed, in this part of our investigation, to the suspicion which adheres to every christian testimony. We have already made some attempts to analyze that suspicion into its ingredients, and we conceive, that the circumstance of the Christians being an interested

party, is only one, and not perhaps the principal of these ingredients. At all events, this may be the proper place for disposing of that one ingredient, and for offering a few general observations on the strength of the christian testimony.

18. In estimating the value of any testimony, there are two distinct subjects of consideration; the person who gives the testimony, and the people to whom the testimony is addressed. It is quite needless to enlarge on the resources which, in the present instance, we derive from both these considerations, and how much each of them contributes to the triumph and solidity of the christian argument. In as far as the people who give the testimony are concerned, how could they be mistaken in their account of the books of the New Testament, when some of them lived in the same age with the original writers, and were their intimate acquaintances; and when all of them had the benefit of an uncontrolled series of evidence, reaching down from the date of the earliest publications to their own times? Or, how can we suspect that they falsified, when there runs through their writings the same tone of plainness and sincerity, which is allowed to stamp the character of authenticity on other productions; and, above all, when, upon the strength even of heathen testimony, we conclude that many of them, by their sufferings and death, gave the highest evidence that man can give, of his speaking under the influence of a real and honest conviction? In as far as the people who received the testimony are concerned, to what other circumstances can we ascribe their concurrence, than to the truth of that

testimony? In what way was it possible to deceive them upon a point of general notoriety? The books of the New Testament are referred to by the ancient Fathers, as writings generally known and respected by the Christians of that period. If they were obscure writings, or had no existence at the time, how can we account for the credit and authority of those Fathers who appealed to them, and had the effrontery to insult their fellow Christians by a falsehood so palpable, and so easily detected? Allow them to be capable of this treachery, we have still to explain, how the people came to be the dupes of so glaring an imposition; how they could be persuaded to give up every thing for a religion whose teachers were so unprincipled as to deceive them, and so unwise as to commit themselves upon ground where it was impossible to elude discovery. Could Clement have dared to refer the people of Corinth to an epistle said to be received by themselves, and which had no existence? or, could he have referred the Christians at large, to writings which they never heard of? And it was not enough to maintain the semblance of truth with the people of their own party. Where were the Jews all the time? and how was it possible to escape the correction of these keen and vigilant observers? We mistake the matter much, if we think, that Christianity at that time was making its insidious way in silence and in secrecy, through a listless and unconcerned public. All history gives an opposite representation. The passions and curiosity of men were quite upon the alert. The popular enthusiasm

had been excited on both sides of the question. It had drawn the attention of the established authorities in different provinces of the empire, and the merits of the christian cause had become a matter of frequent and formal discussion in courts of judicature. If, in these circumstances, the christian writers had the hardihood to venture upon a falsehood, it would have been upon safer ground than what they actually adopted. They would never have hazarded to assert what was so open to contradiction, as the existence of books held in reverence among all the churches, and which nobody either in or out of these churches ever heard of. They would never have been so unwise as to commit in this way a cause, which had not a single circumstance to recommend it but its truth and its evidences.

19. The falsehood of the christian testimony on this point would carry along with it a concurrence of circumstances, each of which is the strangest and most unprecedented that ever was heard of. *First*, That men, who sustained in their writings all the characters of sincerity, and many of whom submitted to martyrdom, as the highest pledge of sincerity which can possibly be given, should have been capable of falsehood at all. *Second*, That this tendency to falsehood should have been exercised so unwisely, as to appear in an assertion perfectly open to detection, and which could be so readily converted to the discredit of that religion, which it was the favourite ambition of their lives to promote and establish in the world. *Third*, That this testimony could have gained the

concurrence of the people to whom it was addressed, and that, with their eyes perfectly open to its falsehood, they should be ready to make the sacrifice of life and of fortune in supporting it. *Fourth*, That this testimony should never have been contradicted by the Jews, and that they should have neglected so effectual an opportunity of disgracing a religion, the progress of which they contemplated with so much jealousy and alarm. Add to this, that it is not the testimony of one writer which we are making to pass through the ordeal of so many difficulties: It is the testimony of many writers, who lived at different times, and in different countries, and who add the very singular circumstance of their entire agreement with one another, to the other circumstances, equally unaccountable, which we have just now enumerated. The falsehood of their united testimony is not to be conceived. It is a supposition which we are warranted to condemn, upon the strength of any one of the above improbabilities taken separately. But the fair way of estimating their effect upon the argument is, to take them jointly; and, in the language of the doctrine of chances, to take the product of all the improbabilities into one another. The argument which this product furnishes for the truth of the christian testimony, has, in strength and conclusiveness, no parallel in the whole compass of ancient literature.

20. The testimony of Celsus is looked upon as peculiarly valuable, because it is disinterested. But if this consideration gives so much weight to the testimony of Celsus, why should so much doubt and suspicion annex to the testimony of christian

writers, several of whom, before his time, have given a fuller and more express testimony to the authenticity of the Gospel? In the persecutions they sustained; in the obvious tone of sincerity and honesty which runs through their writings; in their general agreement upon this subject; in the multitude of their followers, who never could have confided in men that ventured to commit themselves, by the assertion of what was obviously and notoriously false; in the check which the vigilance both of Jews and Heathens exercised over every christian writer of that period;—in all these circumstances, they give every evidence of having delivered a fair and unpolluted testimony.

CHAP. III.

On the internal Marks of Truth and Honesty to be found in the New Testament.

1. II. We shall now look into the New Testament itself, and endeavour to lay before the reader the internal marks of truth and honesty, which are to be found in it.

2. Under this head it may be right to insist upon the minute accuracy, which runs through all its allusions to the existing manners and circumstances of the times. To appreciate the force of this argument, it would be right to attend to the peculiar situation of Judea, at the time of our Saviour. It was then under the dominion of

the Roman Emperors, and comes frequently under the notice of the profane historians of that period. From this source we derive a great variety of information, as to the manner in which the Emperors conducted the government of their different provinces; what degree of indulgence was allowed to the religious opinions of the people whom they held in subjection; in how far they were suffered to live under the administration of their own laws; the power which was vested in the presidents of provinces; and a number of other circumstances relative to the criminal and civil jurisprudence of that period. In this way, there is a great number of different points in which the historians of the New Testament can be brought into comparison with the secular historians of the age. The history of Christ and his Apostles contains innumerable references to the state of public affairs. It is not the history of obscure and unnoticed individuals. They had attracted much of the public attention. They had been before the governors of the country. They had passed through the established forms of justice; and some of them underwent the trial and punishment of the times. It is easy to perceive, then, that the New Testament writers were led to allude to a number of these circumstances in the political history and constitution of the times, which came under the cognizance of ordinary historians. This was delicate ground for an inventor to tread upon; and particularly, if he lived at an age subsequent to the time of his history. He might in this case have fabricated a tale, by confining himself to the obscure and familiar incidents of

private history; but it is only for a true and a contemporary historian, to sustain a continued accuracy through his minute and numerous allusions to the public policy and government of the times.

3. Within the period of the gospel history, Judea experienced a good many vicissitudes in the state of its government. At one time it formed part of a kingdom under Herod the Great. At another, it formed part of a smaller government under Archelaus. It, after this, came under the direct administration of a Roman governor; which form was again interrupted, for several years, by the elevation of Herod Agrippa to the sovereign power, as exercised by his grandfather; and it was at last left in the form of a province at the conclusion of the evangelical history. There were also frequent changes in the political state of the countries adjacent to Judea; and which are often alluded to in the New Testament. A caprice of the reigning Emperor often gave rise to a new form of government, and a new distribution of territory. It will be readily conceived, how much these perpetual fluctuations in the state of public affairs, both in Judea and its neighbourhood, must add to the power and difficulty of that ordeal to which the gospel history has been subjected.

4. On this part of the subject, there is no want of witnesses with whom to confront the writers of the New Testament. In addition to the Roman writers who have touched upon the affairs of Judea, we have the benefit of a Jewish historian, who has given us a professed history of his own

country. From him, as was to be expected, we have a far greater quantity of copious and detailed narrative, relative to the internal affairs of Judea, to the manners of the people, and those particulars which are connected with their religious belief, and ecclesiastical constitution. With many, it will be supposed to add to the value of his testimony, that he was not a Christian; but that, on the other hand, we have every reason to believe him to have been a most zealous and determined enemy to the cause. It is really a most useful exercise, to pursue the harmony which subsists between the writers of the New Testament, and those Jewish and profane authors with whom we bring them into comparison. Throughout the whole examination, our attention is confined to forms of justice; succession of governors in different provinces; manners, and political institutions. We are therefore apt to forget the sacredness of the subject; and we appeal to all who have prosecuted this inquiry, if this circumstance is not favourable to their having a closer and more decided impression of the truth of the gospel history. By instituting a comparison betwixt the Evangelists and contemporary authors, and restricting our attention to those points which come under the cognizance of ordinary history, we put the Apostles and Evangelists on the footing of ordinary historians; and it is for those who have actually undergone the labour of this examination, to tell how much this circumstance adds to the impression of their authenticity. The mind gets emancipated from the peculiar delusion which attaches to the sacred-

ness of the subject, and which has the undoubted effect of restraining the confidence of its inquiries. The argument assumes a secular complexion, and the writers of the New Testament are restored to that credit, with which the reader delivers himself up to any other historian, who has a much less weight and quantity of historical evidence in his favour.

5. We refer those readers who wish to prosecute this inquiry, to the first volume of Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospels*. We shall restrict ourselves to a few general observations on the nature and precise effect of the argument.

6. In the first place, the accuracy of the numerous allusions to the circumstances of that period which the gospel history embraces, forms a strong corroboration of that antiquity which we have already assigned to its writers from external testimony. It amounts to a proof, that it is the production of authors who lived antecedent to the destruction of Jerusalem, and, consequently, about the time that is ascribed to them by all the external testimony which has already been insisted upon. It is that accuracy, which could only be maintained by a contemporary historian. It would be difficult, even for the author of some general speculation, not to betray his time by some occasional allusion to the ephemeral customs and institutions of the period in which he wrote. But the authors of the New Testament run a much greater risk. There are five different pieces of that collection which are purely historical, and where there is a continued reference to the characters, and politics, and passing events of the

day. The destruction of Jerusalem swept away the whole fabric of Jewish polity; and it is not to be conceived, that the memory of a future generation could have retained that minute, that varied, that intimate acquaintance with the statistics of a nation no longer in existence, which is evinced in every page of the evangelical writers. We find, in point of fact, that both the heathen and christian writers of subsequent ages do often betray their ignorance of the particular customs which obtained in Judea during the time of our Saviour. And it must be esteemed a strong circumstance in favour of the antiquity of the New Testament, that on a subject in which the chances of detection are so numerous, and where we can scarcely advance a single step in the narrative, without the possibility of betraying our time by some mistaken allusion, it stands distinguished from every later composition, in being able to bear the most minute and intimate comparison with the contemporary historians of that period.

7. The argument derives great additional strength, from viewing the New Testament, not as one single performance, but as a collection of several performances. It is the work of no less than eight different authors; who wrote without any appearance of concert; who published in different parts of the world; and whose writings possess every evidence, both internal and external, of being independent productions. Had only one author exhibited the same minute accuracy of allusion, it would have been esteemed a very strong evidence of his antiquity. But when we

see so many authors exhibiting such a well-sustained and almost unexcepted accuracy through the whole of their varied and distinct narratives, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion, that they were either the eye-witnesses of their own history, or lived about the period of its accomplishment.

8. When different historians undertake the affairs of the same period, they either derive their information from one another, or proceed upon distinct and independent information of their own. Now, it is not difficult to distinguish the copyist from the original historian. There is something in the very style and manner of an original narrative, which announces its pretensions. It is not possible that any one event, or any series of events, should make such a similar impression upon two witnesses, as to dispose them to relate it in the same language; to describe it in the same order; to form the same estimate as to the circumstances which should be noticed as important, and those other circumstances which should be suppressed as immaterial. Each witness tells the thing in his own way; makes use of his own language; and brings forward circumstances which the other might omit altogether, as not essential to the purpose of his narrative. It is this agreement in the facts, with this variety in the manner of describing them, that never fails to impress upon the inquirer that additional conviction which arises from the concurrence of separate and independent testimonies. Now, this is precisely that kind of coincidence which subsists between the New Testament writers and Josephus, in their

allusions to the peculiar customs and institutions of that age. Each party maintains the style of original and independent historians. The one often omits altogether, or makes only a slight and distant allusion to what occupies a prominent part in the composition of the other. There is not the slightest vestige of any thing like a studied coincidence betwixt them. There is variety, but no opposition; and it says much for the authenticity of both histories, that the most scrupulous and attentive criticism can scarcely detect a single example of an apparent contradiction in the testimony of these different authors, which does not admit of a likely, or at least a plausible, reconciliation.

9. When the difference betwixt two historians is carried to the length of a contradiction, it enfeebles the credit of both their testimonies. When the agreement is carried to the length of a close and scrupulous remembrance in every particular, it destroys the credit of one of the parties as an independent historian. In the case before us, we neither perceive this difference, nor this agreement. Such are the variations, that, at first sight, the reader is alarmed with the appearance of very serious and embarrassing difficulties. And such is the actual coincidence, that the difficulties vanish when we apply to them the labours of a profound and intelligent criticism. Had it been the object of the gospel writers to trick out a plausible imposition on the credulity of the world, they would have studied a closer resemblance to the existing authorities of that period; nor would

they have laid themselves open to the superficial brilliancy of Voltaire, which dazzles every imagination, and reposed their vindication with the Lelands and Lardners of a distant posterity, whose sober erudition is so little attended to, and which so few know how to appreciate.

10. In the Gospels, we are told that Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee, married his brother Philip's wife. In Josephus we have the same story; only he gives a different name to Philip, and calls him Herod; and, what adds to the difficulty, there was a Philip of that family, whom we know, not to have been the first husband of Herodias. This is at first sight a little alarming. But in the progress of our inquiries, we are given to understand from this same Josephus, that there were three Herods in the same family, and therefore no improbability in there being two Philips. We also know, from the histories of that period, that it was quite common for the same individual to have two names; and this is never more necessary than when employed to distinguish brothers who have one name the same. The Herod who is called Philip is just as likely a distinction as the Simon who is called Peter, or the Saul who is called Paul. The name of the high priest, at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion, was Caiaphas, according to the Evangelists. According to Josephus, the name of the high priest at that period was Joseph. This would have been precisely a difficulty of the same kind, had not Josephus happened to mention that this Joseph was also called Caiaphas. Would it have been dealing fairly with the Evangelists, we ask, to have

made their credibility depend upon the accidental omission of another historian? Is it consistent with any acknowledged principle of sound criticism, to bring four writers so entirely under the tribunal of Josephus, each of whom stands as firmly supported by all the evidences which can give authority to an historian; and who have greatly the advantage of him in this, that they can add the argument of their concurrence to the argument of each separate and independent testimony? It so happens, however, in the present instance, that even Jewish writers, in their narrative of the same circumstance, give the name of Philip to the first husband of Herodias. We by no means conceive that any foreign testimony was necessary for the vindication of the Evangelists. Still, however, it must go far to dissipate every suspicion of artifice in the construction of their histories. It proves, that, in the confidence with which they delivered themselves up to their own information, they neglected appearance, and felt themselves independent of it. This apparent difficulty, like many others of the same kind, lands us in a stronger confirmation of the honesty of the Evangelists; and it is delightful to perceive how truth receives a fuller accession to its splendour, from the attempts which are made to disgrace and to darken it.

11. On this branch of the argument, the impartial inquirer must be struck with the little indulgence which infidels, and even Christians, have given to the evangelical writers. In other cases, when we compare the narratives of contemporary historians, it is not expected that all the circumstances alluded

to by one will be taken notice of by the rest; and it often happens, that an event or a custom is admitted upon the faith of a single historian; and the silence of all other writers is not suffered to attach suspicion or discredit to his testimony. It is an allowed principle, that a scrupulous resemblance betwixt two histories is very far from necessary to their being held consistent with one another. And, what is more, it sometimes happens, that with contemporary historians there may be an apparent contradiction, and the credit of both parties remain as entire and unsuspicious as before. Posterity is, in these cases, disposed to make the most liberal allowances. Instead of calling it a contradiction, they often call it a difficulty. They are sensible, that in many instances a seeming variety of statement has, upon a more extensive knowledge of ancient history, admitted of a perfect reconciliation. Instead, then, of referring the difficulty in question to the inaccuracy or bad faith of any of the parties, they, with more justness and more modesty, refer it to their own ignorance, and to that obscurity which necessarily hangs over the history of every remote age. These principles are suffered to have great influence in every secular investigation; but so soon as, instead of a secular, it becomes a sacred investigation, every ordinary principle is abandoned, and the suspicion annexed to the teachers of religion is carried to the dereliction of all that candour and liberality with which every other document of antiquity is judged of and appreciated. How does it happen that the authority of Josephus should be acquiesced in as a first

principle, while every step in the narrative of the Evangelists must have foreign testimony to confirm and support it? How comes it, that the silence of Josephus should be construed into an impeachment of the testimony of the Evangelists, while it is never admitted, for a single moment, that the silence of the Evangelists can impart the slightest blemish to the testimony of Josephus? How comes it, that the supposition of two Philips in one family should throw a damp of scepticism over the gospel narrative, while the only circumstance which renders that supposition necessary is the single testimony of Josephus; in which very testimony it is necessarily implied, that there are two Herods in that same family? How comes it, that the Evangelists, with as much internal, and a vast deal more of external evidence in their favour, should be made to stand before Josephus, like so many prisoners at the bar of justice? In any other case, we are convinced that this would be looked upon as *rough handling*. But we are not sorry for it. It has given more triumph and confidence to the argument. And it is no small addition to our faith, that its first teachers have survived an examination, which, in point of rigour and severity, we believe to be quite unexampled in the annals of criticism.

12. It is always looked upon as a favourable presumption, when a story is told circumstantially. The art and the safety of an impostor is, to confine his narrative to generals, and not to commit himself by too minute a specification of time and place, and allusion to the manners or occurrences of the

day. The more of circumstance that we introduce into a story, we multiply the chances of detection, if false; and therefore, where a great deal of circumstance is introduced, it proves, that the narrator feels the confidence of truth, and labours under no apprehension for the fate of his narrative. Even though we have it not in our power to verify the truth of a single circumstance, yet the mere property of a story being circumstantial is always felt to carry an evidence in its favour. It imparts a more familiar air of life and reality to the narrative. It is easy to believe, that the groundwork of a story may be a fabrication; but it requires a more refined species of imposture than we can well conceive, to construct a harmonious and well-sustained narrative, abounding in minute and circumstantial details, which support one another, and where, with all our experience of real life, we can detect nothing misplaced, or inconsistent, or improbable.

13. To prosecute this argument in all its extent, it would be necessary to present the reader with a complete analysis or examination of the gospel history. But the most superficial observer cannot fail to perceive, that it maintains, in a very high degree, the character of being a circumstantial narrative. When a miracle is recorded, we have generally the name of the town or neighbourhood where it happened; the names of the people concerned; the effect upon the hearts and convictions of the bystanders; the arguments and examinations it gave birth to; and all that minuteness of reference and description which impresses a strong character of reality upon the whole history. If we take

along with us the time at which this history made its appearance, the argument becomes much stronger. It does not merely carry a presumption in its favour, from being a circumstantial history: It carries a proof in its favour, because these circumstances were completely within the reach and examination of those to whom it was addressed. Had the Evangelists been false historians, they would not have committed themselves upon so many particulars. They would not have furnished the vigilant inquirers of that period with such an effectual instrument for bringing them into discredit with the people; nor foolishly supplied, in every page of their narrative, so many materials for a cross-examination, which would infallibly have disgraced them.

14. Now, we of this age can institute the same cross-examination. We can compare the evangelical writers with contemporary authors, and verify a number of circumstances in the history, and government, and peculiar economy of the Jewish people. We therefore have it in our power to institute a cross-examination upon the writers of the New Testament; and the freedom and frequency of their allusions to these circumstances supply us with ample materials for it. The fact, that they are borne out in their minute and incidental allusions by the testimony of other historians, gives a strong weight of what has been called circumstantial evidence in their favour. As a specimen of the argument, let us confine our observations to the history of our Saviour's trial, and execution, and burial. They brought him to Pontius Pilate. We know, both from Tacitus

and Josephus, that he was at that time governor of Judea. A sentence from him was necessary before they could proceed to the execution of Jesus; and we know that the power of life and death was usually vested in the Roman governor. Our Saviour was treated with derision; and this we know to have been a customary practice at that time, previous to the execution of criminals, and during the time of it. Pilate scourged Jesus before he gave him up to be crucified. We know, from ancient authors, that this was a very usual practice among the Romans. The account of an execution generally ran in this form: He was stripped, whipped, and beheaded, or executed. According to the Evangelists, his accusation was written on the top of the cross; and we learn from Suetonius and others, that the crime of the person to be executed was affixed to the instrument of his punishment. According to the Evangelists, this accusation was written in three different languages; and we know from Josephus, that it was quite common in Jerusalem to have all public advertisements written in this manner. According to the Evangelists, Jesus had to bear his cross; and we know, from other sources of information, that this was the constant practice of these times. According to the Evangelists, the body of Jesus was given up to be buried at the request of friends. We know that, unless the criminal was infamous, this was the law, or custom with all Roman governors.

15. These, and a few more particulars of the same kind, occur within the compass of a single page of the evangelical history. The circum-

stantial manner of the history affords a presumption in its favour, antecedent to all examination into the truth of the circumstances themselves. But it makes a strong addition to the evidence, when we find, that in all the subordinate parts of the main story, the Evangelists maintain so great a consistency with the testimony of other authors, and with all that we can collect from other sources of information, as to the manners and institutions of that period. It is difficult to conceive, in the first instance, how the inventor of a fabricated story would hazard such a number of circumstances, each of them supplying a point of comparison with other authors, and giving to the inquirer an additional chance of detecting the imposition. And it is still more difficult to believe, that truth should have been so artfully blended with falsehood in the composition of this narrative, particularly as we perceive nothing like a forced introduction of any one circumstance. There appears to be nothing out of place; nothing thrust in with the view of imparting an air of probability to the history. The circumstance upon which we bring the Evangelists into comparison with profane authors, is often not intimated in a direct form, but in the form of a slight or distant allusion. There is not the most remote appearance of its being fetched or sought for. It is brought in accidentally, and flows in the most natural and undesigned manner out of the progress of the narrative.

16. The circumstance, that none of the gospel writers are inconsistent with one another, falls

better under a different branch of the argument. It is enough for our present purpose, that there is no single writer inconsistent with himself. It often happens, that falsehood carries its own refutation along with it; and that, through the artful disguises which are employed in the construction of a fabricated story, we can often detect a flaw or a contradiction, which condemns the authority of the whole narrative. Now, every single piece of the New Testament wants this mark or character of falsehood. The different parts are found to sustain, and harmonize, and flow out of each other. Each has at least the merit of being a consistent narrative. For any thing we see upon the face of it, it may be true, and a further hearing must be given before we can be justified in rejecting it as the tale of an impostor.

17. There is another mark of falsehood which each of the gospel narratives appears to be exempted from. There is little or no parading about their own integrity. We can collect their pretensions to credit from the history itself, but we see no anxious display of these pretensions. We cannot fail to perceive the force of that argument which is derived from the publicity of the christian miracles, and the very minute and scrupulous examination which they had to sustain from the rulers and official men of Judea. But this publicity, and these examinations, are simply recorded by the Evangelists. There is no boastful reference to these circumstances, and no ostentatious display of the advantage which they

have to the christian argument. They bring their story forward in the shape of a direct and unencumbered narrative, and deliver themselves with that simplicity and unembarrassed confidence, which nothing but their consciousness of truth, and the perfect feeling of their own strength and consistency, can account for. They do not write, as if their object was to carry a point that was at all doubtful or suspicious. It is simply to transmit to the men of other times, and of other countries, a memorial of the events which led to the establishment of the Christian religion in the world. In the prosecution of their narrative, we challenge the most refined judge of the human character, to point out a single symptom of diffidence in the truth of their own story, or of art to cloak this diffidence from the notice of the most severe and vigilant observers. The manner of the New Testament writers does not carry in it the slightest idea of its being an assumed manner. It is quite natural, quite unguarded, and free of all apprehension, that their story is to meet with any discredit or contradiction from any of those numerous readers, who had it fully in their power to verify or to expose it. We see no expedient made use of to obtain or to conciliate the acquiescence of their readers. They appear to feel as if they did not need it. They deliver what they have to say, in a round and unvarnished manner; nor is it in general accompanied with any of those strong asseverations by which an impostor so often attempts to practise upon the credulity of his victims.

18. In the simple narrative of the Evangelists, they betray no feeling of wonder at the extraordinary nature of the events which they record, and no consciousness that what they are announcing is to excite any wonder among their readers. This appears to us to be a very strong circumstance. Had it been the newly broached tale of an impostor, he would, in all likelihood, have feigned astonishment himself, or, at least, have laid his account with the doubt and astonishment of those to whom it was addressed. When a person tells a wonderful story to a company who are totally unacquainted with it, he must be sensible, not merely of the surprise which is excited in the minds of the hearers, but of a corresponding sympathy in his own mind with the feelings of those who listen to him. He lays his account with the wonder, if not the incredulity, of his hearers ; and this distinctly appears in the terms with which he delivers his story, and the manner in which he introduces it. It makes a wide difference, if, on the other hand, he tells the same story to a company, who have long been apprized of the chief circumstances, but who listen to him for the mere purpose of obtaining a more distinct and particular narrative. Now, in as far as we can collect from the manner of the Evangelists, they stand in this last predicament. They do not write, as if they were imposing a novelty upon their readers. In the language of Luke, they write for the sake of giving more distinct information; and that the readers *might know the certainty of those things, wherein they had been instructed.* In the prosecution of this task, they deliver themselves

with the most familiar and unembarrassed simplicity. They do not appear to anticipate the surprise of their readers, or to be at all aware, that the marvellous nature of their story is to be any obstacle to its credit or reception in the neighbourhood. At the first performance of our Saviour's miracles, there was a strong and a widely spread sensation over the whole country. *His fame went abroad*, and *all people were amazed*. This is quite natural; and the circumstance of no surprise being either felt or anticipated by the Evangelists, in the writing of their history, can best be accounted for by the truth of the history itself, that the experience of years had blunted the edge of novelty, and rendered miracles familiar, not only to them, but to all the people to whom they addressed themselves.

19. What appears to us a most striking internal evidence for the truth of the gospel is, that perfect unity of mind and of purpose which is ascribed to our Saviour. Had he been an impostor, he could not have foreseen all the fluctuations of his history; and yet no expression of surprise is recorded to have escaped from him. No event appears to have caught him unprepared. We see no shifting of doctrine or sentiment, with a view to accommodate to new or unexpected circumstances. His parables and warnings to his disciples, give sufficient intimation that he laid his account with all those events, which appeared to his unenlightened friends to be so untoward and so unpromising. In every explanation of his objects, we see the perfect consistency of a mind, before whose prophetic eye

all futurity lay open; and, when the events of this futurity came round, he met them, not as chances that were unforeseen, but as certainties which he had provided for. This consistency of his views is supported through all the variations of his history; and it stands finely contrasted in the record of the Evangelists, with the misconceptions, the surprises, the disappointments of his followers. The gradual progress of their minds, from the splendid anticipations of earthly grandeur to a full acquiescence in the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, throws a stronger light on the perfect unity of purpose and of conception which animated his, and which can only be accounted for by the inspiration that filled and enlightened it. It may have been possible enough to describe a well-sustained example of this contrast from an actual history before us. It is difficult, however, to conceive, how it could be sustained so well, and in a manner so apparently artless, by means of invention; and particularly when the inventors made their own errors, and their own ignorance, form part of the fabrication.

CHAPTER IV.

On the Testimony of the original Witnesses to the Truth of the Gospel Narrative.

1. III. THERE was nothing in the situation of the New Testament writers, which leads us to perceive

that they had any possible inducement for publishing a falsehood.

2. We have not to allege the mere testimony of the christian writers, for the danger to which the profession of Christianity exposed all its adherents at that period. We have the testimony of Tacitus to this effect. We have innumerable allusions, or express intimations, of the same circumstance in the Roman historians. The treatment and persecution of the Christians makes a principal figure in the affairs of the empire; and there is no point better established in ancient history, than that the bare circumstance of being a Christian brought many to the punishment of death, and exposed all to the danger of a suffering the most appalling and repulsive to the feelings of our nature.

3. It is not difficult to perceive, why the Roman government, in its treatment of Christians, departed from its usual principles of toleration. We know it to have been their uniform practice, to allow every indulgence to the religious belief of those different countries in which they established themselves. The truth is, that such an indulgence demanded of them no exertion of moderation or principle. It was quite consonant to the spirit of Paganism. A different country worshipped different gods; but it was a general principle of Paganism, that each country had its gods, to which the inhabitants of that country owed their peculiar homage and veneration. In this way there was no interference between the different religions which prevailed in the world. It fell in with the policy of the Roman government to allow the fullest tolera-

tion to other religions, and it demanded no sacrifice of principle. It was even a dictate of principle with them to respect the gods of other countries; and the violation of a religion different from their own seems to have been felt, not merely as a departure from policy or justice, but to be viewed with the same sentiment of horror which is annexed to blasphemy or sacrilege. So long as we were under Paganism, the truth of one religion did not involve in it the falsehood or rejection of another. In respecting the religion of another country, we did not abandon our own; nor did it follow, that the inhabitants of that other country annexed any contempt or discredit to the religion in which we had been educated. In this mutual reverence for the religion of each other, no principle was departed from, and no object of veneration abandoned. It did not involve in it the denial or relinquishment of our own gods, but only the addition of so many more gods to our catalogue.

4. In this respect, however, the Jews stood distinguished from every other people within the limits of the Roman empire. Their religious belief carried in it something more than attachment to their own system. It carried in it the contempt and detestation of every other. Yet, in spite of this circumstance their religion was protected by the mild and equitable toleration of the Roman government. The truth is, that there was nothing in the habits or character of the Jews, which was calculated to give much disturbance to the establishments of other countries. Though they admitted converts from other nations, yet their spirit of

proselytism was far from being of that active or adventurous kind, which could alarm the Roman government for the safety of any existing institutions. Their high and exclusive veneration for their own system, gave an unsocial disdain to the Jewish character, which was not at all inviting to foreigners; but still, as it led to nothing mischievous in point of effect, it seems to have been overlooked by the Roman government as a piece of impotent vanity.

5. But the case was widely different with the christian system. It did not confine itself to the denial or rejection of every other system. It was for imposing its own exclusive authority over the consciences of all, and for detaching as many as it could from their allegiance to the religion of their own country. It carried on its forehead all the offensive characters of a monopoly, and not merely excited resentment by the supposed arrogance of its pretensions, but from the rapidity and extent of its innovations, spread an alarm over the whole Roman empire for the security of all its establishments. Accordingly, at the commencement of its progress, so long as it was confined to Judea and the immediate neighbourhood, it seems to have been in perfect safety from the persecutions of the Roman government. It was at first looked upon as a mere modification of Judaism, and that the first Christians differed from the rest of their own countrymen only in *certain questions of their own superstition.* For a few years after the crucifixion of our Saviour, it seems to have excited no alarm on the part of the Roman Emperors, who did not

depart from their usual maxims of toleration, till they began to understand the magnitude of its pretensions, and the unlooked-for success which attended them.

6. In the course of a very few years after its first promulgation, it drew down upon it the hostility of the Roman government; and the fact is undoubted, that some of its first teachers, who announced themselves to be the companions of our Saviour, and the eye-witnesses of all the remarkable events in his history, suffered martyrdom for their adherence to the religion which they taught.

7. The disposition of the Jews to the religion of Jesus was no less hostile; and it manifested itself at a still earlier stage of the business. The causes of this hostility are obvious to all who are in the slightest degree conversant with the history of those times. It is true, that the Jews did not at all times possess the power of life and death, nor was it competent for them to bring the Christians to execution by the exercise of legal authority. Still, however, their powers of mischief were considerable. Their wishes had always a certain control over the measures of the Roman governor; and we know, that it was this control which was the means of extorting from Pilate the unrighteous sentence, by which the very first Teacher of our religion was brought to a cruel and ignominious death. We also know, that under Herod Agrippa the power of life and death was vested in a Jewish sovereign, and that this power was actually exerted against the most distinguished Christians of that time. Add to this, that the Jews had, at all times, the

power of inflicting the lesser punishments. They could whip, they could imprison. Besides all this, the Christians had to brave the frenzy of an enraged multitude; and some of them actually suffered martyrdom in the violence of the popular commotions.

8. Nothing is more evident than the utter disgrace which was annexed by the world at large to the profession of Christianity at that period. Tacitus calls it "*superstitio exitiabilis*," and accuses the Christians of enmity to mankind. By Epictetus and others, their heroism is termed obstinacy; and it was generally treated by the Roman governors as the infatuation of a miserable and despised people. There was none of that glory annexed to it which blazes around the martyrdom of a patriot, or a philosopher. That constancy which, in another cause, would have made them illustrious, was held to be a contemptible folly, which only exposed them to the derision and insolence of the multitude. A name and a reputation in the world might sustain the dying moments of Socrates or Regulus; but what earthly principles can account for the intrepidity of those poor and miserable outcasts, who consigned themselves to a voluntary martyrdom in the cause of their religion?

9. Having premised these observations, we offer the following alternative to the mind of every candid inquirer. The first Christians either delivered a sincere testimony, or they imposed a story upon the world which they knew to be a fabrication.

10. The persecutions to which the first Chris-

tians voluntarily exposed themselves, compel us to adopt the first part of the alternative. It is not to be conceived that a man would resign fortune, and character, and life, in the assertion of what he knew to be a falsehood. The first Christians must have believed their story to be true; and it only remains to prove, that, if they believed it to be true, it must be true indeed.

11. A voluntary martyrdom must be looked upon as the highest possible evidence which it is in the power of man to give of his sincerity. The martyrdom of Socrates has never been questioned, as an undeniable proof of the sincere devotion of his mind to the principles of that philosophy for which he suffered. The death of Archbishop Cranmer will be allowed by all to be a decisive evidence of his sincere rejection of what he conceived to be the errors of Popery, and his thorough conviction of the truth of the opposite system. When the council of Geneva burnt Servetus, no one will question the sincerity of the latter's belief, however much he may question the truth of it. Now, in all these cases, the proof goes no farther than to establish the sincerity of the martyr's belief. It goes but a little way indeed, in establishing the justness of it. This is a different question. A man may be mistaken, though he be sincere. His errors, if they are not seen to be such, will exercise all the influence and authority of truth over him. Martyrs have bled on the opposite sides of the question. It is impossible, then, to rest on this circumstance as an argument for the truth of either system; but the argument is always deemed

incontrovertible, in as far as it goes to establish the sincerity of each of the parties, and that both died in the firm conviction of the doctrines which they professed.

12. Now, the martyrdom of the first Christians stands distinguished from all other examples by this circumstance, that it not merely proves the sincerity of the martyr's belief, but it also proves that what he believed was true. In other cases of martyrdom, the sufferer, when he lays down his life, gives his testimony to the truth of an opinion. In the case of the Christians, when they laid down their lives, they gave their testimony to the truth of a fact, of which they affirmed themselves to be the eye, and the ear-witnesses. The sincerity of both testimonies is unquestionable; but it is only in the latter case that the truth of the testimony follows as a necessary consequence of its sincerity. An opinion comes under the cognizance of the understanding, ever liable, as we all know, to error and delusion. A fact comes under the cognizance of the senses, which have ever been esteemed as infallible, when they give their testimony to such plain, and obvious, and palpable appearances, as those which make up the evangelical story. We are still at liberty to question the philosophy of Socrates, or the orthodoxy of Cranmer and Servetus; but if we were told by a christian teacher, in the solemnity of his dying hour, and with the dread apparatus of martyrdom before him, that he saw Jesus after he had risen from the dead; that he conversed with him many days; that he put his hand into the

print of his sides; and, in the ardour of his joyful conviction, exclaimed, "My Lord, and my God!" we should feel that there was no truth in the world, did this language and this testimony deceive us.

13. If Christianity be not true, then the first Christians must have been mistaken as to the subject of their testimony. This supposition is destroyed by the nature of the subject. It was not testimony to a doctrine which might deceive the understanding. It was something more than testimony to a dream, or a trance, or a midnight fancy, which might deceive the imagination. It was testimony to a multitude and a succession of palpable facts, which could never have deceived the senses, and which preclude all possibility of mistake, even though it had been the testimony only of one individual. But when, in addition to this, we consider, that it is the testimony, not of one, but of many individuals: that it is a story repeated in a variety of forms, but substantially the same; that it is the concurring testimony of different eye-witnesses, or the companions of eye-witnesses—we may, after this, take refuge in the idea of falsehood and collusion; but it is not to be admitted, that these eight different writers of the New Testament could have all blundered the matter with such method, and such uniformity.

14. We know that, in spite of the magnitude of their sufferings, there are infidels who, driven from the first part of the alternative, have recurred to the second, and have affirmed, that the glory of establishing a new religion, induced the first

Christians to assert, and to persist in asserting, what they knew to be a falsehood. But (though we should be anticipating the last branch of the argument) they forget, that we have the concurrence of two parties to the truth of Christianity, and that it is the conduct only of one of the parties, which can be accounted for by the supposition in question. The two parties are the teachers and the taught. The former may aspire to the glory of founding a new faith; but what glory did the latter propose to themselves from being the dupes of an imposition so ruinous to every earthly interest, and held in such low and disgraceful estimation by the world at large? Abandon the teachers of Christianity to every imputation, which infidelity, on the rack for conjectures to give plausibility to its system, can devise; how shall we explain the concurrence of its disciples? There may be a glory in leading, but we see no glory in being led. If Christianity were false, and Paul had the effrontery to appeal to his five hundred living witnesses, whom he alleges to have seen Christ after his resurrection, the submissive acquiescence of his disciples remains a very inexplicable circumstance. The same Paul, in his Epistles to the Corinthians, tells them that some of them had the gift of healing, and the power of working miracles; and that the signs of an apostle had been wrought among them in wonders and mighty deeds. A man aspiring to the glory of an accredited teacher, would never have committed himself on a subject, where his falsehood could have been so readily exposed. And in the veneration with which we

know his Epistles to have been preserved by the church of Corinth, we have not merely the testimony of their writer to the truth of the christian miracles, but the testimony of a whole people, who had no interest in being deceived.

15. Had Christianity been false, the reputation of its first teachers lay at the mercy of every individual among the numerous proselytes whom they had gained to their system. It may not be competent for an unlettered peasant to detect the absurdity of a doctrine; but he can at all times lift his testimony against a fact, said to have happened in his presence, and under the observation of his senses. Now it so happens, that in a number of the Epistles, there are allusions to, or express intimations of, the miracles that had been wrought in the different churches to which these Epistles are addressed. How comes it, if it be at all a fabrication, that it was never exposed? We know, that some of the disciples were driven, by the terrors of persecuting violence, to resign their profession. How should it happen, that none of them ever attempted to vindicate their apostasy, by laying open the artifice and insincerity of their christian teachers? We may be sure that such a testimony would have been highly acceptable to the existing authorities of that period. The Jews would have made the most of it; and the vigilant and discerning officers of the Roman government would not have failed to turn it to account. The mystery would have been exposed and laid open, and the curiosity of latter ages would have been satisfied as to the wonderful and unaccountable steps, by which a

religion could make such head in the world, though it rested its whole authority on facts; the falsehood of which was accessible to all who were at the trouble to inquire about them. But no! We hear of no such testimony from the apostates of that period. We read of some, who, agonized at the reflection of their treachery, returned to their first profession, and expiated, by martyrdom, the guilt which they felt they had incurred by their dereliction of the truth. This furnishes a strong example of the power of conviction; and when we join with it, that it is conviction in the integrity of those teachers who appealed to miracles which had been wrought among them, it appears to us a testimony in favour of our religion which is altogether irresistible.

16. But before taking leave of the original witnesses, let us state in what respect their testimony is so much stronger than that of any subsequent witness. The following as an example is the testimony of Quadratus who flourished at the end of the first century:—"The works of our Saviour were always conspicuous, because they were real; both they that were healed, and they that were raised from the dead: who were seen not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards. Not only whilst he dwelled on this earth, but also after his departure and for a good while after it, insomuch that some of them have reached to our times." This testimony of Quadratus excites a peculiar sense of confidence and satisfaction in the mind of every honest inquirer. It is the testimony of one standing without the canon of

Scripture, and deponing to his own knowledge of some who had been raised from the dead by the apostles, and who were still surviving at the time that he wrote. It is felt as if bringing a great accession of strength and evidence to the miraculous story of the gospel; and we desiderate like testimonies from those fathers who were stationed sufficiently near to the apostolic times, for handing down the same sort either of contemporaneous or at least of closely succeeding testimony to the men of distant ages.

17. Now it were well that we made the application to this case of a very obvious principle, in questions of historic faith. That written evidence for the reality of any transactions which was most satisfying to the men of the age when they happened, should also, if transmitted downwards, be the most satisfying to us. The epistle of Barnabas the fellow labourer of Paul is of a moral or hortatory rather than of an historical character; but, in the judgment of these days, it was not thought worthy of a place in the canon. Suppose that his subject had led him, which it did not, to make several such historical allusions as the one we so highly prize by Quadratus—we should have felt a weight and an impression in the testimony, which we do not feel in the explicit and distinct testimony of Mark, who was altogether historical. Now by this feeling we reverse the principle which has just been announced. It was the distincter information, the weightier evidence and authority of Mark, which preferred him to the place he now occupies within the limits of the New Testament;

and it was the inferiority of Barnabas in these particulars, which determined his station to be that not of a principal but of a subsequent and a subordinate witness. Had there been no Barnabas, and had Mark with his actual gospel been standing in his place—the disappearance of one of the evangelists from the Bible would have made no sensible abatement in the original evidence, but a mighty addition certainly to the subsequent evidence for the truth of the christian story; yet, whatever effect this altered state of things may have had on our impression of the credibility of the gospel, it is certain that the evidence as it stands is of greater substantive validity or force, than it would have been under the hypothesis that we are now making. We should have had no Barnabas; and Mark, of inferior grade to what he now is, occupying a lower place than he does at present—just because held, in the age that was best qualified to estimate his pretensions, to be more unworthy of that credit and of that confidence which then raised him to the scriptural rank that he enjoys.

18. We may now see the reason, why in the writings of the apostolic or succeeding fathers, we have no professed narrative of the miracles of the gospels. We have abundant incidental attestations to their truth; and throughout, all the symptoms that we could desire, of a common understanding and a common faith upon this subject, between themselves and the christian public whom they addressed. But for any of them to undertake a formal or express history of these

miraculous transactions, was a thing quite uncalled for, and for that very reason not attempted. The truth is, that, in the superior estimation of the histories already before the world, there would have been no demand for their less authoritative and authentic compositions. Readers would just have done then, what readers do now—turned them to the fullest and the most accredited historians of the transactions, wherewith they wanted to acquaint themselves; and, in so doing, neglected the others. And the sure consequence, in these days of laborious book-making, the sure consequence of neglect was speedy oblivion. Copies would have ceased to be multiplied, when copies were little or not at all in request—so that, had a thing so unnecessary as a gospel by Barnabas or Clement or Polycarp been actually produced, it would have been left to perish, just by the superior confidence of their age in the actual gospels of our own unperishable record. Strange, that we should feel less satisfied with documents which now stand alone, precisely because they monopolized the whole truth and satisfaction of contemporaries; or that in comparison with them we should feel so longing an appetency for other narratives, which, if ever they existed, were so undervalued by these contemporaries as to pass into irrecoverable extinction and be forgotten.

19. Luke, in the introduction to his gospel, refers to memoirs of the life and history of our Saviour. How delighted we should be, if, among the ruins of Pompeii, we could lay hold of an evident and authentic copy of one of these memoirs.

And why is it that none of them have been transmitted to us? For no other reason than that the best judges of their value thought them unworthy of the honour. The truth is that they have all been superseded by the gospels of the New Testament—even those, which, in the language of Luke set the whole narrative with greater authority and distinctness before the christian community—so that, in the documents we actually have, there is a tenfold surpassing weight both of authority and evidence over all that we so insatiably aspire after.

20. The great number of scriptural manuscripts, compared with the small number of the manuscripts of all other books, is of itself a testimony in favour of the original witnesses for the truth of the gospel narratives. Not that the works which have disappeared were always of small value; for they may have since been superseded by other works which answered the purpose so much better, that copies of the former ones were no more called for. For example, there seems to have been a number of small separate memoirs of our Saviour during the time of the apostles—perhaps taken by eye and ear-witnesses on the spot; or, it may be, immediately collected from the hearsay information of his companions and disciples. The accounts alluded to by Luke at the commencement of his gospel seem to have been of this description; but after Luke took in hand, out of these and other materials within his reach, to publish a more distinct and comprehensive narrative—copies of these minor records would cease to be multiplied. The

whole demand would be turned to the fuller and more authentic statements of the evangelists; and, without any reflection on the general accuracy of the prior documents, they would fall into desuetude, simply from their being inferior to those which succeeded them in authority and fulness, and so would ultimately disappear.

21. Now we all feel it would be an infinite gratification, if some of these original memoirs had been transmitted to the present day. With what eagerness of curiosity should we peruse any relict of this sort, if discovered and demonstrated on satisfactory evidence to be one of the very pieces which Luke had adverted to; and what is more, we should feel as if a distinct confirmation had been given to the evangelical story by the addition of such a testimony to those which are already in our possession. Now the want of these supplementary testimonies arises from the very worth and sufficiency of those testimonies which have actually been transmitted to us. That want of additional documents which we do not have, and which some might feel to be a symptom of defect, proceeds in fact from an altogether opposite cause, from the strength and abundance of those documents which we do have. It was a serious labour to multiply books in these days; and, generally speaking, it would not have been done without a practical necessity; and they who read for the practical object of informing themselves respecting the Saviour, would naturally prefer those narratives which were most esteemed for their worth and copiousness, and had the stamp of greatest

authority affixed to them. Had they felt it desirable or useful, over and above the accounts of the four evangelists, to read the lesser memoirs also; this might have given rise to such a demand, as would lead to a renewal of their copies, and so to their preservation. But the very reason why they were suffered to perish, is, because of their felt insignificance and worthlessness at the time, when compared with the pieces which have come down to us. In the fact of their disappearance, we behold the testimony of that contemporaneous age to the superior value of those actual scriptures which have been admitted into our canon—or, in other words, the judgment to this effect of the men best qualified, by their opportunities of observation, and their nearness to the events of the gospel history. In the credit and the completeness of the four gospels, they felt themselves independent of these supplementary memoirs; and by what strange illusion then is it, that we should not feel the same independence, or that we should desiderate, and for the purpose of gaining more evidence too, those additional memorials—when the very fact of their having been permitted to go into oblivion, if viewed aright, would enhance the splendour of that evidence which beams direct upon us from the canonical scriptures themselves. It is true that they are lost; but they have been lost in that blaze of light which shone upon the church, from the writings of apostles and apostolic men.

22. We have already put the case of Mark having had a station assigned to him, which he only could have had, because of the inferior estima-

tion in which he was held by his contemporaries—so that in the state in which he has actually come down to us, his testimony is absolutely of greater value, however weaker the impression may be which it makes upon us. Without insisting longer upon this case, we hold it of importance to remark while upon the subject, that, works may have disappeared which produced a great effect in their day, and have left behind them a permanent benefit which shall be felt to the latest ages of the church. Take for an example the Hexapla of Origen, the first of our scriptural polyglots, consisting of the Hebrew Old Testament in Hebrew and Greek characters, along with four distinct versions of the same in Greek—that is, the Septuagint, and those of Aquilas Symmachus and Theodotion. This stupendous work, consisting as it did of forty or fifty manuscript volumes, could not have been multiplied and transmitted but at a prodigious expense; and it is not therefore to be wondered at, that so few remains of it should have survived to the present day. Yet who can doubt the enduring benefit which the church has received from this work, in restoring and purifying the sacred text, and so improving every subsequent edition that was framed by those who availed themselves of the labours of its author.

23. At all events it remains a sensible proof of the estimation in which the scriptures in former ages have been held over all other books—the immense superiority in the number of its existing manuscripts over those of all other works. It gives, as it were, the evidence of eye-sight to our cause. A work not possessing authority, was simply left

to disappear from the non-multiplication of its copies. Whereas, on the other hand, the indefinite number of ancient copies of the sacred scriptures actually before our eyes, speaks most decisively for the concurrent reverence in which these records were held in earlier times. The force of this consideration will be unfelt by those, who stop short at any century in the middle ages, and conceive of it as the fountain-head of this sort of testimony. But when, on the faith of undoubted documents, we can carry upwards the same expression of a preference for the scriptures over all other works, to those ages when Christianity was an oppressed and suffering religion—such an expression of general respect and confidence for the scriptures at such periods, carries an evidence along with it that is quite irresistible.

24. On the whole then, it may be concluded, that the evidence for the truth of Christianity does not commence with Barnabas the first of the apostolic fathers. It has an origin in the writers themselves of the inspired volume; and, broad and brilliant as the flood of light is which descends along the historic pathway of the christian church, there is even a surpassing brilliancy in that primitive halo by which the fountain-head is irradiated.

CHAPTER V.

On the Testimony of subsequent Witnesses.

1. IV. But this brings us to the last division of the argument, viz. that the leading facts in the history of the Gospel are corroborated by the testimony of others.

2. The evidence we have already brought forward for the antiquity of the New Testament, and the veneration in which it was held from the earliest ages of the church, is an implied testimony of all the Christians of that period to the truth of the gospel history. By proving the genuineness of St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, we do not merely establish his testimony to the truth of the christian miracles,—we establish the additional testimony of the whole church of Corinth, who would never have respected these Epistles, if Paul had ventured upon a falsehood so open to detection, as the assertion, that miracles were wrought among them, which not a single individual ever witnessed. By proving the genuineness of the New Testament at large, we secure, not merely that argument which is founded on the testimony and concurrence of its different writers, but also the testimony of those immense multitudes, who, in distant countries, submitted to the New Testament as the rule of their faith. The testimony of the teachers, whether we take into consideration the subject of that testimony, or the circumstances

under which it was delivered, is of itself a stronger argument for the truth of the gospel history, than can be alleged for the truth of any other history which has been transmitted down to us from ancient times. The concurrence of the taught carries along with it a host of additional testimonies, which gives an evidence to the evangelical story, that is altogether unexampled. On a point of ordinary history, the testimony of Tacitus is held decisive, because it is not contradicted. The history of the New Testament is not only not contradicted, but confirmed by the strongest possible expressions which men can give of their acquiescence in its truth; by thousands, who were either agents or eye-witnesses of the transactions recorded; who could not be deceived; who had no interest, and no glory to gain by supporting a falsehood; and who, by their sufferings in the cause of what they professed to be their belief, gave the highest evidence that human nature can give of sincerity.

3. In this circumstance, it may be perceived, how much the evidence for Christianity goes beyond all ordinary historical evidence. A profane historian relates a series of events which happen in a particular age; and we count it well, if it be his own age, and if the history which he gives us be the testimony of a contemporary author. Another historian succeeds him at the distance of years, and, by repeating the same story, gives the additional evidence of his testimony to its truth. A third historian perhaps goes over the same ground, and lends another confirmation to the history. And it is thus, by collecting all the lights which are thinly

scattered over the tract of ages and of centuries, that we obtain all the evidence which can be got, and all the evidence that is generally wished for.

4. Now, there is room for a thousand presumptions, which, if admitted, would overturn the whole of this evidence. For any thing we know, the first historians may have had some interest in disguising the truth, or substituting in its place a falsehood, and a fabrication. True, it has not been contradicted; but they form a very small number of men, who feel strongly or particularly interested in a question of history. The literary and speculative men of that age may have perhaps been engaged in other pursuits, or their testimonies may have perished in the wreck of centuries. The second historian may have been so far removed in point of time from the events of his narrative, that he can furnish us not with an independent, but with a derived testimony. He may have copied his account from the original historian, and the falsehood have come down to us in the shape of an authentic and well-attested history. Presumptions may be multiplied without end; yet in spite of them, there is a natural confidence in the veracity of man, which disposes us to as firm a belief in many of the facts of ancient history, as in the occurrences of the present day.

5. The history of the Gospel, however, stands distinguished from all other history, by the uninterrupted nature of its testimony, which carries down its evidence, without a chasm, from its earliest promulgation to the present day. We do not speak of the superior weight and splendour of its

evidences, at the first publication of that history, as being supported, not merely by the testimony of one, but by the concurrence of several independent witnesses. We do not speak of its subsequent writers, who follow one another in a far closer and more crowded train, than there is any other example of in the history or literature of the world. We speak of the strong though unwritten testimony of its numerous proselytes; who, in the very fact of their proselytism, give the strongest possible confirmation to the gospel, and fill up every chasm in the recorded evidence of past times.

6. In the written testimonies for the truth of the christian religion. Barnabas comes next in order to the first promulgators of the evangelical story. He was a contemporary of the Apostles, and writes a very few years after the publication of the pieces which make up the New Testament. Clement follows, who was a fellow-labourer of Paul, and writes an epistle in the name of the church of Rome, to the church of Corinth. The written testimonies follow one another with a closeness and a rapidity of which there is no example; but what we insist on at present is, the unwritten and implied testimony of the people who composed these two churches. There can be no fact better established, than that these two churches were planted in the days of the Apostles, and that the Epistles which were respectively addressed to them, were held in the utmost authority and veneration. There is no doubt, that the leading facts of the gospel history were familiar to them;

that it was in the power of many individuals amongst them to verify these facts, either by their own personal observation, or by an actual conversation with eye-witnesses; and that, in particular, it was in the power of almost every individual in the church of Corinth, either to verify the miracles which St. Paul alludes to in his Epistle to that church, or to detect and expose the imposition, had there been no foundation for such an allusion. What do we see in all this, but the strongest possible testimony of a whole people to the truth of the christian miracles? There is nothing like this in common history—the formation of a society, which can only be explained by the history of the gospel, and where the conduct of every individual furnishes a distinct pledge and evidence of its truth. And to have a full view of the argument, we must reflect, that it is not one, but many societies scattered over the different countries of the world; that the principle upon which each society was formed, was the divine authority of Christ and his Apostles, resting upon the recorded miracles of the New Testament; that these miracles were wrought with a publicity, and at a nearness of time, which rendered them accessible to the inquiries of all, for upwards of half a century; that nothing but the power of conviction could have induced the people of that age to embrace a religion so disgraced and so persecuted; that every temptation was held out for its disciples to abandon it; and that though some of them, overpowered by the terrors of punishment, were driven to apostasy, yet not one of them has left us a testimony which

can impeach the miracles of Christianity, or the integrity of its first teachers.

7. It may be observed, that in pursuing the line of continuity from the days of the Apostles, the written testimonies for the truth of the christian miracles follow one another in closer succession, than we have any other example of in ancient history. But what gives such peculiar and unprecedented evidence to the history of the gospel is, that in the concurrence of the multitudes who embraced it, and in the existence of those numerous churches and societies of men who espoused the profession of the christian faith, we cannot but perceive, that every small interval of time betwixt the written testimonies of authors is filled up by materials so strong and so firmly cemented, as to present us with an unbroken chain of evidence, carrying as much authority along with it, as if it had been a diurnal record, commencing from the days of the Apostles, and authenticated through its whole progress by the testimony of thousands.

8. Every convert to the christian faith in those days, gives one additional testimony to the truth of the gospel history. Is he a Gentile? The sincerity of his testimony is approved by the persecutions, the sufferings, the danger, and often the certainty of martyrdom, which the profession of Christianity incurred. Is he a Jew? The sincerity of his testimony is approved by all these evidences, and, in addition to them, by this well-known fact, that the faith and doctrine of Christianity were in the highest degree repugnant to the wishes and prejudices of that people. It ought

never to be forgotten, that, in as far as Jews are concerned, Christianity does not owe a single proselyte to its doctrines, but to the power and credit of its evidences, and that Judea was the chief theatre on which these evidences were exhibited. It cannot be too often repeated, that these evidences rest not upon arguments but upon facts; and that the time, and the place, and the circumstances, rendered these facts accessible to the inquiries of all who chose to be at the trouble of this examination. And there can be no doubt that this trouble was taken, whether we reflect on the nature of the christian faith, as being so offensive to the pride and bigotry of the Jewish people, or whether we reflect on the consequences of embracing it, which were derision, and hatred, and banishment, and death. We may be sure, that a step which involved in it such painful sacrifices, would not be entered into upon light and insufficient grounds. In the sacrifices they made, the Jewish converts gave every evidence of having delivered an honest testimony in favour of the christian miracles; and when we reflect, that many of them must have been eye-witnesses, and all of them had it in their power to verify these miracles, by conversation and correspondence with by-standers, there can be no doubt that it was not merely an honest, but a competent testimony. There is no fact better established, than that many thousands among the Jews believed in Jesus and his Apostles; and we have therefore to allege their conversion as a strong additional confirmation of the written testimony of the original historians.

9. One of the popular objections against the truth of the christian miracles, is the general infidelity of the Jewish people. We are convinced, that at the moment of proposing this objection, an actual delusion exists in the mind of the infidel. In his conception, the Jews and the Christians stand opposed to each other. In the belief of the latter, he sees nothing but a party, or an interested testimony; and in the unbelief of the former, he sees a whole people persevering in their ancient faith, and resisting the new faith, on the ground of its insufficient evidences. He forgets all the while, that the testimony of a great many of these Christians is in fact the testimony of Jews. He only attends to them in their present capacity. He contemplates them in the light of Christians, and annexes to them all that suspicion and incredulity which are generally annexed to the testimony of an interested party. He is aware of what they are at present—Christians, and defenders of Christianity; but he has lost sight of their original situation, and is totally unmindful of this circumstance, that in their transition from Judaism to Christianity they have given him the very evidence he is in quest of. Had another thousand of these Jews renounced the faith of their ancestors, and embraced the religion of Jesus, they would have been equivalent to a thousand additional testimonies in favour of Christianity; and testimonies, too, of the strongest and most unsuspicious kind that can well be imagined. But this evidence would make no impression on the mind of an infidel, and the strength of it is disguised, even from the eyes of the Christian. These thou-

sand, in the moment of their conversion, lose the appellation of Jews, and merge into the name and distinction of Christians. The Jews, though diminished in number, retain the national appellation; and the obstinacy with which they persevere in the belief of their ancestors, is still looked upon as the adverse testimony of an entire people. So long as one of that people continues a Jew, his testimony is looked upon as a serious impediment in the way of the christian evidences. But the moment he becomes a Christian, his motives are contemplated with distrust. He is one of the obnoxious and suspected party. The mind carries a reference only to what he is, and not to what he has been. It overlooks the change of sentiment; and forgets, that, in the renunciation of old habits, and old prejudices; in defiance to sufferings and disgrace; in attachment to a religion so repugnant to the pride and bigotry of their nation; and above all, in submission to a system of doctrines which rested its authority on the miracles of their own time, and their own remembrance; every Jewish convert gives the most decisive testimony which man can give for the truth and divinity of our religion.

10. But why, then, says the infidel, did they not all believe? Had the miracles of the gospel been true, we do not see how human nature could have held out against an evidence so striking and so extraordinary; nor can we at all enter into the obstinacy of that belief which is ascribed to the majority of the Jewish people, and which led them to shut their eyes against a testimony, that no

man of common sense, we think, could have resisted.

11. Many christian writers have attempted to resolve this difficulty; and to prove that the infidelity of the Jews, in spite of the miracles which they saw, is perfectly consistent with the known principles of human nature. For this purpose, they have enlarged, with much force and plausibility, on the strength and inveteracy of the Jewish prejudices—on the bewildering influence of religious bigotry upon the understanding of men—on the woful disappointment which Christianity offered to the pride and interests of the nation—on the selfishness of the priesthood—and on the facility with which they might turn a blind and fanatical multitude, who had been trained, by their earliest habits, to follow and to revere them.

12. In the gospel history itself, we have a very consistent account at least of the Jewish opposition to the claims of our Saviour. We see the deeply wounded pride of a nation that felt itself disgraced by the loss of its independence. We see the arrogance of its peculiar and exclusive claims to the favour of the Almighty. We see the anticipation of a great prince, who was to deliver them from the power and subjection of their enemies. We see their insolent contempt for the people of other countries, and the foulest scorn that they should be admitted to an equality with themselves in the honours and benefits of a revelation from heaven. We may easily conceive how much the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles was calculated to gall, and irritate, and disappoint them; how it must have

mortified their national vanity; how it must have alarmed the jealousy of an artful and interested priesthood; and how it must have scandalized the great body of the people, by the liberality with which it addressed itself to all men, and to all nations, and raised to an elevation with themselves, those whom the firmest habits and prejudices of their country had led them to contemplate under all the disgrace and ignominy of outcasts.

13. Accordingly we know, in fact, that bitterness, and resentment, and wounded pride, lay at the bottom of a great deal of the opposition which Christianity experienced from the Jewish people. In the New Testament history itself, we see repeated examples of their outrageous violence; and this is confirmed by the testimony of many other writers. In the history of the martyrdom of Polycarp, it is stated, that the Gentiles and Jews inhabiting Smyrna, in a furious rage, and with a loud voice, cried out, "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods, who teacheth all men not to sacrifice, nor to worship them!" They collected wood, and the dried branches of trees, for his pile; and it is added, "the Jews also, according to custom, assisting with the greatest forwardness." It is needless to multiply testimonies to a point so generally understood; as, that it was not conviction alone which lay at the bottom of their opposition to the Christians; that a great deal of passion entered into it; and that their numerous acts of hostility against the worshippers of Jesus, carry in them all the marks of fury and resentment.

14. Now we know, that the power of passion will often carry it very far over the power of conviction. We know that the strength of conviction is not in proportion to the quantity of evidence *presented*, but to the quantity of evidence *attended to*, and perceived, in consequence of that attention. We also know, that attention is, in a great measure, a voluntary act; and that it is often in the power of the mind, both to turn away its attention from what would land it in any painful or humiliating conclusion, and to deliver itself up exclusively to those arguments which flatter its taste and its prejudices. All this lies within the range of familiar and every-day experience. We all know, how much it ensures the success of an argument, when it gets a *favourable* hearing. In by far the greater number of instances, the parties in a litigation are not merely each *attached* to their own side of the question; but each *confident and believing* that theirs is the side on which the justice lies. In those contests of opinion, which take place every day between man and man, and particularly if passion and interest have any share in the controversy, it is evident to the slightest observation, that though it might have been selfishness, in the first instance, which gave a peculiar direction to the understanding, yet each of the parties often comes, at last, to entertain a sincere conviction in the truth of his own argument. It is not, that truth is not one and immutable; the whole difference lies in the observers, each of them viewing the object through the medium of his own prejudices, or cherishing those peculiar habits of attention and

understanding, to which taste or inclination had disposed him.

15. In addition to all this, we know, that though the evidence for a particular truth be so glaring, that it forces itself upon the understanding, and all the sophistry of passion and interest cannot withstand it; yet if this truth be of a very painful and humiliating kind, the obstinacy of man will often dispose him to resist its influence, and, in the bitterness of his malignant feelings, to carry a hostility against it, and that, too, in proportion to the weight of the argument which may be brought forward in its favour.

16. Now, if we take into account the inveteracy of the Jewish prejudices, and reflect how unpalatable and how mortifying to their pride must have been the doctrine of a crucified Saviour; we believe that their conduct, in reference to Christianity and its miraculous evidences, presents us with nothing anomalous or inexplicable, and that it will appear a possible and a likely thing to every understanding, that has been much cultivated in the experience of human affairs, in the nature of mind, and in the science of its character and phenomena.

17. There is a difficulty, however, in the way of this investigation. From the nature of the case, it bears no resemblance to any thing else that has either been recorded in history, or has come within the range of our own personal observation. There is no other example of a people called upon to renounce the darling faith and principles of their country, and that upon the authority of miracles exhibited before them. All the experience

we have about the operation of prejudice, and the perverseness of the human temper and understanding, cannot afford a complete solution of the question. In many respects it is a case *sui generis;* and the only creditable information which we can obtain, to enlighten us in this inquiry, is through the medium of that very testimony upon which the difficulty in question has thrown the suspicion that we want to get rid of.

18. Let us give all the weight to this argument of which it is susceptible, and the following is the precise degree in which it affects the merits of the controversy. When the religion of Jesus was promulgated in Judea, its first teachers appealed to miracles wrought by themselves, in the face of day, as the evidence of their being commissioned by God. Many adopted the new religion upon this appeal, and many rejected it. An argument in favour of Christianity is derived from the conduct of the first. An objection against Christianity is derived from the conduct of the second. Now, allowing that we are not in possession of experience enough for estimating, in *absolute terms*, the strength of the objection, we propose the following as a solid and unexceptionable principle, upon which to estimate a comparison betwixt the strength of the objection, and the strength of the argument. We are sure that the first would not have embraced Christianity had its miracles been false; but we are not sure beforehand, whether the second would have rejected this religion on the supposition of the miracles being true. If experience does not enlighten us as to how far the

exhibition of a real miracle would be effectual in inducing men to renounce their old and favourite opinions, we can infer nothing decisive from the conduct of those who still kept by the Jewish religion. This conduct was a matter of uncertainty, and any argument which may be extracted from it, cannot be depended upon. But the case is widely different with that party of their nation who were converted from Judaism to Christianity. We know that the alleged miracles of Christianity were perfectly open to examination. We are sure, from our experience of human nature, that in a question so interesting, this examination would be given. We know, from the very nature of the miraculous facts, so remote from every thing like what would be attempted by jugglery, or pretended to by enthusiasm, that, if this examination were given, it would fix the truth or falsehood of the miracles. The truth of these miracles, then, for any thing we know, may be consistent with the conduct of the Jewish party; but the falsehood of these miracles, from all that we do know of human nature, is not consistent with the conduct of the christian party. Granting that we are *not sure* whether a miracle would force the Jewish nation to renounce their opinions, all that we can say of the conduct of the Jewish party is, that we are not able to explain it. But there is one thing that we *are sure* of. We are sure, that if the pretensions of Christianity be false, it never could have forced any part of the Jewish nation to renounce their opinions, with its alleged miracles, so open to detection, and its doctrines so offensive

to every individual. The conduct of the christian party then is not only what we are able to explain, but we can say with certainty, that it admits of no other explanation, than the truth of that hypothesis which we contend for. We may not know in how far an attachment to existing opinions will prevail over an argument which is felt to be true; but we are sure, that this attachment will never give way to an argument which is perceived to be false; and particularly when danger, and hatred, and persecution, are the consequences of embracing it. The argument for Christianity, from the conduct of the first proselytes, rests upon the firm ground of experience. The objection against it, from the conduct of the unbelieving Jews, has no experience whatever to rest upon.

19. The conduct of the Jews may be considered as a solitary fact in the history of the world; not from its being an exception to the general principles of human nature, but from its being an exhibition of human nature in singular circumstances. We have no experience to guide us in our opinion as to the probability of this conduct; and nothing, therefore, that can impeach a testimony which all experience in human affairs leads us to repose in as unquestionable. But, after this testimony is admitted, we may submit to be enlightened by it; and in the history which it gives us of the unbelieving Jews, it furnishes a curious fact as to the power of prejudice upon the human mind, and a valuable accession to what we before knew of the principles of our nature. It lays before us an exhibition of the human mind in a

situation altogether unexampled, and furnishes us with the result of a singular experiment, if we may so call it, in the history of the species. We offer it as an interesting fact to the moral and intellectual philosopher, that a previous attachment may sway the mind even against the impression of a miracle; and that those who believe not in the historical evidence which established the authority of Christ and of the Apostles, would not believe, even though one rose from the dead.

20. We are inclined to think, that the argument has come down to us in the best possible form, and that it would have been enfeebled by that very circumstance, which the infidel demands as essential to its validity. Suppose, for a moment, that we could give him what he wants; that all the priests and people of Judea were so borne down by the resistless evidence of miracles, as, by one universal consent, to become the disciples of the new religion. What interpretation might have been given to this unanimous movement in favour of Christianity? A very unfavourable one, we apprehend, to the authenticity of its evidences. Will the infidel say, that he has a higher respect for the credibility of those miracles which ushered in the dispensation of Moses, because they were exhibited in the face of a whole people, and gained their unexcepted submission to the laws and the ritual of Judaism? This new revolution would have received the same explanation. We would have heard of its being sanctioned by their prophecies; of its being agreeable to their prejudices; of its being supported by the countenance and

encouragement of their priesthood; and that the jugglery of its miracles imposed upon all, because all were willing to be deceived by them. The actual form in which the history has come down, presents us with an argument free of all these exceptions. We, in the first instance, behold a number of proselytes, whose testimony to the facts of Christianity is approved of by what they lost and suffered in the maintenance of their faith; and we, in the second instance, behold a number of enemies, eager, vigilant, and exasperated, at the progress of the new religion, who have not questioned the authenticity of our histories, and whose silence, as to the public and widely talked of miracles of Christ and his Apostles, we have a right to interpret into the most triumphant of all testimonies.

21. The same process of reasoning is applicable to the case of the Gentiles. Many adopted the new religion, and many rejected it. We may not be sure, if we can give an adequate explanation of the conduct of the latter, on the supposition that the evidences are true; but we are perfectly sure, that we can give no adequate explanation of the conduct of the former, on the supposition that the evidences are false. For any thing we know, it is possible that the one party may have adhered to their former prejudices, in opposition to all the force and urgency of argument, which even an authentic miracle carries along with it. But we know that it is not possible that the other party should renounce these prejudices, and that too in the face of danger and persecution, unless the miracles had been authentic. So great is the

difference betwixt the strength of the argument and the strength of the objection, that we count it fortunate for the merits of the cause, that the conversions to Christianity were partial. We, in this way, secure all the support which is derived from the inexplicable fact of the silence of its enemies; inexplicable on every supposition, but the undeniable evidence and certainty of the miracles. Had the Roman empire made a unanimous movement to the new religion, and all the authorities of the state lent their concurrence to it, there would have been a suspicion annexed to the whole history of the Gospel, which cannot at present apply to it; and, from the collision of the opposite parties, the truth has come down to us in a far more unquestionable form than if no such collision had been excited.

22. The silence of heathen and Jewish writers of that period, about the miracles of Christianity, has been much insisted upon by the enemies of our religion; and has even excited something like a painful suspicion in the breasts of those who are attached to its cause. Certain it is, that no ancient facts have come down to us, supported by a greater quantity of historical evidence, and better accompanied with all the circumstances which can confer credibility on that evidence. When we demand the testimony of Tacitus to the christian miracles, we forget all the while that we can allege a multitude of much more decisive testimonies;—no less than eight contemporary authors, and a train of succeeding writers, who follow one another with a closeness and a rapidity, of which there is

no example in any other department of ancient history. We forget, that the authenticity of these different writers, and their pretensions to credit, are founded on considerations, perfectly the same in kind, though much stronger in degree, than what have been employed to establish the testimony of the most esteemed historians of former ages. For the history of the gospel, we behold a series of testimonies, more continuous, and more firmly sustained, than there is any other example of in the whole compass of erudition. And to refuse this evidence, is a proof, that, in this investigation, there is an aptitude in the human mind to abandon all ordinary principles, and to be carried away by the delusions which we have already insisted on.

23. But let us try the effect of that testimony which our antagonists demand. Tacitus has actually attested the existence of Jesus Christ; the reality of such a personage; his public execution under the administration of Pontius Pilate; the temporary check which this gave to the progress of his religion; its revival, a short time after his death; its progress over the land of Judea, and to Rome itself, the metropolis of the empire;—all this we have in a Roman historian; and, in opposition to all established reasoning upon these subjects, it is by some more firmly confided in upon his testimony, than upon the numerous and concurring testimonies of nearer and contemporary writers. But be this as it may, let us suppose that Tacitus had thrown one particular more into his testimony, and that his sentence had run thus: "They had

their denomination from Christus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate, *and who rose from the dead on the third day after his execution, and ascended into heaven.*" Does it not strike every body, that however true the last piece of information may be, and however well established by its proper historians, this is not the place where we can expect to find it? If Tacitus did not believe the resurrection of our Saviour, (which is probably the case, as he never, in all likelihood, paid any attention to the evidence of a faith which he was led to regard, from the outset, as a pernicious superstition, and a mere modification of Judaism,) it is not to be supposed that such an assertion could ever have been made by him. If Tacitus did believe the resurrection of our Saviour, he gives us an example of what appears not to have been uncommon in these ages—he gives us an example of a man adhering to that system which interest and education recommended, in opposition to the evidence of a miracle which he admitted to be true. Still, even on this supposition, it is the most unlikely thing in the world, that he would have admitted the fact of our Saviour's resurrection into his history. It is most improbable, that a testimony of this kind would have been given, even though the resurrection of Jesus Christ had been admitted; and, therefore, the want of this testimony carries in it no argument that the resurrection is a falsehood. If, however, in opposition to all probability, this testimony had been given, it would have been appealed to as a most striking confirma-

tion of the main fact of the evangelical history. It would have figured away in all our elementary treatises, and been referred to as a master-argument in every exposition of the evidences of Christianity. Infidels would have been challenged to believe in it on the strength of their own favourite evidence, the evidence of a classical historian; and must have been at a loss how to dispose of this fact, when they saw an unbiassed heathen giving his round and unqualified testimony in its favour.

24. Let us now carry this supposition a step farther. Let us conceive that Tacitus not only believed the fact, and gave his testimony to it, but that he believed it so far as to become a Christian. Is his testimony to be refused, because he gives this evidence of its sincerity? Tacitus asserting the fact, and remaining a heathen, is not so strong an argument for the truth of our Saviour's resurrection, as Tacitus asserting the fact and becoming a Christian in consequence of it. Yet the moment that this transition is made—a transition by which, in point of fact, his testimony becomes stronger—in point of impression it becomes less; and, by a delusion common to the infidel and the believer, the argument is held to be weakened by the very circumstance which imparts greater force to it. The elegant and accomplished scholar becomes a believer. The truth, the novelty, the importance of this new subject, withdraw him from every other pursuit. He shares in the common enthusiasm of the cause, and gives all his talents and eloquence to the support of it. Instead of the Roman historian, Tacitus comes down to posterity in the shape of a Christian

Father, and the high authority of his name is lost in a crowd of similar testimonies.

25. A direct testimony to the miracles of the New Testament from the mouth of a heathen, is not to be expected. We cannot satisfy this demand of the infidel; but we can give him a host of much stronger testimonies than he is in quest of—the testimonies of those men who were heathens, and who embraced a hazardous and a disgraceful profession, under a deep conviction of those facts to which they gave their testimony. "Oh, but you now land us in the testimony of Christians!" This is very true; but it is the very fact of their being Christians in which the strength of the argument lies: and in each of the numerous Fathers of the christian church, we see a stronger testimony than the required testimony of the heathen Tacitus. We see men who, if they had not been Christians, would have risen to as high an eminence as Tacitus in the literature of the times; and whose direct testimonies to the gospel history would, in that case, have been most impressive, even to the mind of an infidel. And are these testimonies to be less impressive, because they were preceded by conviction, and sealed by martyrdom?

26. This is a matter of so much importance that it is worthy of still further illustration. It were well that it could be made quite palpable, why it is that a christian is so much more valuable than a heathen testimony. We have already adverted to a certain subtle delusion on this subject, in virtue of which it is not felt to be so valuable—insomuch that there is not only a greater feeling of

curiosity, but even a greater feeling of conviction associated with the remotest allusion of a classic author to Christianity, than there is with the broad distinct authentic and uncontradicted testimony of a christian father. It is thus that a deep and subtle disguise is thrown over the real strength of the christian argument; and, in opposition to all the principles of sound criticism or of historical evidence, the faintest scintillations of a notice or an allusion from writers at a distance and uninformed, are most eagerly caught at—while a broad effulgence of testimony in the scene of the gospel transactions, of testimony sealed by the martyrdom of those who gave it, of testimony accredited by the silence of enemies as well as by a countless multitude of proselytes to the cause—all is overlooked and forgotten as a thing of nought. With how much greater interest, for example, do we read Lardner's Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies in favour of the gospel narrative, than Lardner's Credibility—the latter work exhibiting a succession of christian authors, following each other at an average interval of not more than ten years, and composing altogether a hundred-fold more firm and continuous pathway, than any other by which the facts or the informations of ancient times have descended to the men of the present day. Let us feel assured, that, in this preference of the weak to the strong, of the dim and dying testimony to the day-light effulgence which sits on the origin of our church and sends down a stream of direct historic light through its successive generations—that, in this, there is some mental perversity in subtle

operation within us, which nothing will extinguish but a careful attention to the relative condition of heathen and christian writers at that period.

27. It is well for this purpose to consider what that is which would have brightened and improved the actual testimony of Tacitus, and made it still more available to the defence of our cause. He evidently writes of the Christians as any cultivated Roman might be naturally expected to do, who felt no great interest and possessed no great information upon the subject. We fancy it would have been better, if he had taken a more decided interest, and bequeathed to us by some more satisfying expression, his sense of the importance of the cause; and that it would have been better still, had he made himself more fully and distinctly informed, and embodied in his classic pages some more particulars of the gospel history; and best of all, if, attracted by the worth and magnitude of the theme, he had actually journeyed, as other chroniclers have done, among the places and the people where the most authentic records could have been consulted, and the most authentic traditions could have been gathered and appreciated. Let us stop then for a moment at the idea of this last supposition being realized. Let us figure Tacitus on his travels of inquiry; and, conceiving of the result variously, let us try to estimate the influence thereof upon the cause, in whatever way the supposition may be made. First we may imagine him, to have collected in great abundance and strength, disproofs of the christian story; and to have published his refutation of it to the world. This has not been

done by Tacitus or any other; and the utter non-existence of any such document in refutation of a religion which provoked so much of resistance —of a document that would have been hailed by thousands who were interested in the overthrow of the gospel, and that would have been transmitted with so much care both by Jews and heathens to succeeding times—the utter non-existence we say of any such document, is of itself an incalculable triumph and confirmation to our faith. But secondly, we might imagine, that, instead of disproof, he had met with nothing but valid and satisfying credentials on the side of Christianity; and that he had, in an additional book of his annals, incorporated a statistical account of the affairs of Judea, and presented us with the facts of the New Testament, along with all the other facts of his general narrative, as the matters of his historic faith. This, we are apt to imagine, is the best supposable state in which the testimony of a classic and pagan author could come down to us with advantage; and yet we are strongly persuaded that such a phenomenon as this in ancient literature would have engendered a host of surmises and suspicions, that nothing could have allayed. It would have been the testimony, no doubt, of an able and eloquent and now much trusted historian; but it would have been testimony, powerless and paralyzed, by the flagrant evidence which it gave of the insincerity of him who uttered it. How is it possible, it would have been asked, that the pagan Tacitus could, as the result of his close and upright and serious investigation, have verified the truth of all these christian miracles yet remained a pagan

still? How could he have come into contact with the earnest demands of Christianity for the surrender of the whole man to its high requisitions, and have seen these demands so accompanied and enforced by the hand of Omnipotence—yet refused to be a Christian? There must, it might have been said, there must be a blemish somewhere, that attaches discredit to the whole testimony. How can such testimony help to convince us of the high claims of this religion—when it does not seem to have convinced himself? Why lay so much stress on the record of an historian, who has given no consistent marks whatever of his own faith in his own narrative? Why should we be impressed by a statement which seems no more to have impressed the author of it, than would any light or floating rumours that he might have caught, respecting the signs and the prodigies of his own paganism, and which enter too into the materials of his history—for the amusement at least, if not the solid information of his readers? After all, can we believe the account he has given to have been the result of grave inquiries terminating in conviction —when not one other evidence of conviction has been rendered by him, than simply the room he has allowed in his record for the miracles of the gospel? What faith can we place in the man who makes so unblushing an exhibition of himself, as to pass for authentic the credentials of this new religion; and yet, from cowardice, or want of consistency and honour, or something which marks at all events a glaring moral perversity of character, declines to be one of its votaries? This last

question explains why it is that no document, of the sort which is so much desiderated, could possibly have been transmitted to us. A heathen indisposed to Christianity would not have been at the pains, we may be assured, to collect the proofs of this religion, and then hold them forth in exhibition to the world or to posterity. They could never have been expected to give the sanction of their express testimony to the miracles of the gospel; and yet, ready as they must have been to gainsay them if they could and discredit them if they could, they have virtually given to the main circumstances of the evangelical story, the most conclusive of all sanctions—the sanction, we mean, of their expressive silence.

28. There only remains then one conceivable result more from the enterprise that we have imagined for Tacitus. The fruit of his inquiries into the miracles of the gospel might have been, that he was overpowered into the conviction of their truth; and that, in virtue of the same integrity and moral earnestness by which he was prompted to the inquiry, he was persuaded to become a Christian. Where is the shadow of an argument, why, in consequence of this, his testimony should become less valuable than before? Is not this the very act or the very transition, at which he makes most emphatic demonstration of the strength and reality of his belief? Whether, in the name of all reason and common sense, should the testimony of Tacitus continuing in the profession of infidelity, or the testimony of Tacitus embracing the faith and braving martyrdom in the avowal of it, have afforded most conclusive evidence to the truth of the gospel? Surely that historian only is to be de-

pended on, who tells us as true, that which himself believes to be true; and by what magical influence then is it, that, on the moment he gives the most intense proof of this belief which man can do, by putting life and all its interests to hazard in the attestation of it—at that moment, our confidence should fall away from him? But for this delusion, we must instantly recognise the fact of Tacitus becoming a Christian on inquiry, as that which stamps a hundred-fold worth upon his testimony: and we ought to recollect that it is just this evidence, this enhanced and perfected evidence, multiplied by the number of christian fathers in the first century after the death of Christ, that we actually possess. In their persons, we have twenty Tacituses?—whose evidence, though unaccountably weaker in point of impression, were substantially stronger in point of reality—on the supposition of an exchange having been made, from the character of a Roman historian to that of a christian father. To an eye of clear and sound intelligence, his testimony were all the brighter by his conversion—yet it would have made no sensible accession to the christian argument, because lost in the kindred effulgence of a mass of similar testimonies. The light of the purest and highest testimony which Tacitus could have given would have faded away, even from the eye of the Christian, because overborne by the accumulated splendour that already sat on the origin of Christianity: on the eye of the infidel it would have made no impression, who would still have turned him away from the splendour as he does at present, because he hates its beams.

29. Yet though, from the nature of the case, no

direct testimony to the christian miracles from a heathen can be looked for, there are heathen testimonies which form an important accession to the christian argument. Such are the testimonies to the state of Judea; the testimonies to those numerous particulars in government and customs, which are so often alluded to in the New Testament, and give it the air of an authentic history; and above all, the testimonies to the sufferings of the primitive Christians, from which we learn, through a channel clear of every suspicion, that Christianity, a religion of facts, was the object of persecution at a time, when eye-witnesses taught, and eye-witnesses must have bled for it.

30. The silence of Jewish and heathen writers, when the true interpretation is given to it, is all on the side of the christian argument. Even though the miracles of the gospel had been believed to be true, it is most unlikely that the enemies of the christian religion would have given their testimony to them; and the absence of this testimony is no impeachment therefore upon the reality of these miracles. But if the miracles of the gospel had been believed to be false, it is most likely that this falsehood would have been asserted by the Jews and Heathens of that period; and the circumstance of no such assertion having been given, is a strong argument for the reality of these miracles. Their silence in not asserting the miracles, is perfectly consistent with their truth; but their silence in not denying them, is not at all consistent with their falsehood. The entire silence of Josephus upon the subject of Christianity,

though he wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem, and gives us the history of that period in which Christ and his Apostles lived, is certainly a very striking circumstance. The sudden progress of Christianity at that time, and the fame of its miracles, (if not the miracles themselves,) form an important part of the Jewish history. How came Josephus to abstain from every particular respecting it? Shall we reverse every principle of criticism, and make the silence of Josephus carry it over the positive testimony of the many historical documents which have come down to us? If we should refuse every christian testimony upon the subject, we surely will not refuse the testimony of Tacitus, who asserts, that this religion spread over Judea, and reached the city of Rome, and was looked upon as an evil of such importance, that it became the object of an authorized persecution by the Roman government; and all this several years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and before Josephus composed his history. Whatever opinion may be formed as to the *truth* of Christianity, certain it is, that its *progress* constituted an object of sufficient magnitude, to compel the attention of any historian who undertook the affairs of that period. How then shall we account for the scrupulous and determined exclusion of it from the history of Josephus? Had its miracles been false, this Jewish historian would gladly have exposed them. But its miracles were true; and silence was the only refuge of an antagonist, and his wisest policy.

31. But though we gather no direct testimony

from Josephus, yet his history furnishes us with many satisfying additions to the christian argument. In the details of policy and manners, he coincides in the main with the writers of the New Testament; and these coincidences are so numerous, and have so undesigned an appearance, as to impress on every person, who is at the trouble of making the comparison, the truth of the evangelical story.

32. If we are to look for direct testimonies to the miracles of the New Testament, we must look to that quarter where alone it would be reasonable to expect them,—to the writings of the christian Fathers, men who were not Jews or Heathens at the moment of recording their testimony; but who had been Jews or Heathens; and who, in their transition to the ultimate state of Christians, give a stronger evidence of integrity, than if they had believed these miracles, and persisted in a cowardly adherence to the safest profession.

33. We do not undertake to satisfy every demand of the infidel. We think we do enough, if we prove that the thing demanded is most unlikely, even though the miracles should be true; and therefore, that the want of it carries no argument against the truth of the miracles. But we do still more than this, if we prove that the testimonies which we actually possess are much stronger than the testimonies he is in quest of. And who can doubt this, when he reflects, that the true way of putting the case betwixt the testimony of the christian Father, which we do have, and the testimony of Tacitus, which we do not have,

is, that the latter would be an assertion not followed up by that conduct, which would have been the best evidence of its sincerity; whereas, the former is an assertion substantiated by the whole life, and by the decisive fact of the old profession having been renounced, and the new profession entered into—a change where disgrace, and danger, and martyrdom, were the consequences?

34. Let us, therefore, enter into an examination of these testimonies.

35. This subject has been in part anticipated, when we treated of the authenticity of the books of the New Testament. We have quotations and references to these books from five apostolic Fathers, the companions of the original writers. We have their testimonies sustained and extended by their immediate successors; and, as we pursue this crowded series of testimonies downwards, they become so numerous, and so explicit, as to leave no doubt on the mind of the inquirers, that the different books of the New Testament are the publications of the authors, whose names they bear; and were received by the christian world, as books of authority, from the first period of their appearance.

36. Now, every sentence in a christian Father, expressive of respect for a book in the New Testament, is also expressive of his faith in its contents. It is equivalent to his testimony for the miracles recorded in it. In the language of the law, it is an act by which he homologates the record, and superinduces his own testimony to that of the original writers. It would be vain to

attempt speaking of all these testimonies. It cost the assiduous Lardner many years to collect them. They are exhibited in his Credibility of the New Testament; and in the multitude of them, we see a power and a variety of evidence for the christian miracles, which is quite unequalled in the whole compass of ancient history.

37. The characteristic of Lardner is an extreme moderation in argument—that is, he refrains from laying greater stress on his materials than they will fully and sufficiently bear. His is almost the manner of one who inclines against his own side; so that should there be any thing doubtful in the testimony, instead of taking the advantage to himself, he willingly gives up the whole advantage to his adversary. He thus reduces the bulk of his testimonies; but, in very proportion to this, does he secure the metallic weight and value of those which remain. He blows away the chaff, as it were, from his argument; and so brings it within a narrower compass—but all that he preserves is sterling; and, though he sacrifices much that many of the friends of Christianity would fondly have retained, we feel assured that by this very sacrifice he has not injured but strengthened the cause. His very modesty has made him a more effective advocate than he would otherwise have been; and any reduction in the multifariousness of the evidence is amply compensated by the well-earned confidence of his readers in the quality, in the thoroughly sifted and ascertained quality, of that which has passed through the ordeal of his searching criticism.

38. He thus stands divested of that which always

gives suspiciousness to a cause—the aspect of a special pleader, determined to make the most of all that he finds, and set every thing off to the greatest advantage. Lardner's way is quite the reverse of this—and he has been blamed by many scholars for an excess of scrupulosity, when he met with evidence which, though of considerable validity in their estimation, he would not admit into his reckoning. The truth is that he gave to the infidels full advantage of every flaw, wherewith any testimony on the side of the Gospel might appear to be vitiated. His in this way is a smaller and shorter summation; but it is all in gold pieces; and it is done with the air and feeling of a man who can afford to give up the columns of the inferior denominations. There is something very impressive in this consciousness of strength; and it gives a sense of security in his hands, which we should not feel, in listening to the demonstrations of a more strenuous partisan. It is the best possible tactics; and really, there is no such scarcity of evidence for our faith, as to render it necessary to adopt any other mode of warfare. Whether it be on the general question of Christianity against infidels, or the special question of Orthodoxy against heretics, we often find a few valid testimonies in the one case, and a few unquestionable texts in the other to be decisive of the contest. Instead of extending our line of defence, we generally do far better to concentrate, and to keep by the impregnable positions of the church militant. For example, though, on perusing the evidence for the miraculous prevention of the attempt by the emperor Julian to rebuild

Jerusalem, we agree in the affirmative sentence of Bishop Warburton—yet we acquiesce in the negative laid upon it by Dr. Lardner.* We can afford

* *See* Warburton's Julian. In comparing Lardner on the one hand with Warburton on the other upon this question, it will be found that the preponderance of argumentative force is with the latter. His Julian is one of the ablest and most characteristic of his specimens. For himself, he belongs to a genus, nowhere more abundantly exemplified than in the Church of England. We might conceive of erudition apart from strength, as in Lardner—or of strength, apart from erudition, as perhaps in Isaac Barrow and Butler, though it was not so much strength as sagacity that formed the characteristic of Butler's mind. But it is the union of both, the native and original vigour along with stores of massive learning—the inherent power conjoined with the extensive scholarship—the momentum and the firm staple of their own independent authorship, along with the achievement of unparalleled reading and research into the authorship of other men—the creative literary power that yielded standard books from themselves, and yet the prodigious industry that enabled them to grapple with whole libraries and to master the books innumerable of the predecessors who had gone before them—it is this combination of vast strength with vast acquisition and labour, that invests, and rightfully invests, with such might and authority, the divines of our sister establishment. We can imagine learning in feeble and impotent hands to be very inefficient; but when learning is wielded by an arm of strength, then we have a mighty instrument in the hold of a mighty agent; and the execution is irresistible. To encounter a man of great personal and original *vis* is sufficiently formidable; but when to this are superadded the lore and the languages of antiquity, and a vast and various information the product of the converse of many years with the tomes of other days—then can we perceive an adequate meaning for the epithets bestowed on the most celebrated heroes of the church militant—the irrefragable doctor—the redoubted champion of the faith—the great Goliath of sacred literature—*capax, profundus, eximius homo et venerabundus*. The first name that occurs to us of one who conjoined this original strength with this acquired scholarship is Grotius. But we are speaking now of the Church of England. Cudworth had both. Chillingworth had both. Bryan Walton had both. Stillingfleet had both. Samuel Clarke had both. Warburton had pre-eminently both. The most recent example perhaps is Horsley who had both. And Samuel Johnson, had he been an ecclesiastic, with the urgent stimulus of a preferment to which he had no other avenue but his works, would, if fairly aroused from his constitutional lethargy and resolutely set on the road of perseverance, have been a perfect exemplar of both.

to give it up—even as we can afford to give up the text, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one;" for from other texts of undoubted integrity and unquestionable meaning, we feel ourselves completely warranted to address the Saviour of the world as my Lord and my God.

39. But, in addition to testimonies in the gross, for the truth of the evangelical history, have we no distinct testimonies to the individual facts which compose it? We have no doubt of the fact, that Barnabas was acquainted with the gospel by Matthew, and that he subscribed to all the information contained in that history. This is a most valuable testimony from a contemporary writer; and a testimony which embraces all the miracles narrated by the Evangelist. But, in addition to this, we should like if Barnabas, upon his own personal conviction, could assert the reality of any of these miracles. It would be multiplying the original testimonies; for he was a companion and a fellow-labourer of the Apostles. We should have been delighted, if, in the course of our researches into the literature of past times, we had met with an authentic record, written by one of the five hundred that are said to have seen our Saviour after his resurrection, and adding his own narrative of this event to the narratives that have already come down to us. Now, is any thing of this kind to be met with in ecclesiastical antiquity? How much of this sort of evidence are we in actual possession of? and if we have not enough to satisfy our keen appetite for evidence on a question of such

magnitude, how is the want of it to be accounted for?

40. Let it be observed, then, that of the twenty-seven books which make up the New Testament, five are narrative or historical, viz. the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, which relate to the life and miracles of our Saviour, and the progress of his religion through the world, for a good many years after his ascension into heaven. All the rest, with the exception of the Revelation of St. John, are doctrinal or admonitory; and their main object is to explain the principles of the new religion, or to impress its duties upon the numerous proselytes who had, even at that early period, been gained over to the profession of Christianity.

41. Besides what we have in the New Testament, no other professed narrative of the miracles of Christianity has come down to us, bearing the marks of an authentic composition by any Apostle, or any contemporary of the Apostles. Now, to those who regret this circumstance, we beg leave to submit the following observations. Suppose that one other narrative of the life and miracles of our Saviour had been composed; and, to give all the value to this additional testimony of which it is susceptible, let us suppose it to be the work of an Apostle. By this last circumstance, we secure to its uttermost extent the advantage of an original testimony, the testimony of another eye-witness, and constant companion of our Saviour. Now, we ask, what would have been the fate of this performance? It would have been incorporated into the New Testament along with the other

gospels. It may have been the Gospel according to Philip. It may have been the Gospel according to Bartholomew. At all events, the whole amount of the advantage would have been the substitution of five gospels instead of four; and this addition, the want of which is so much complained of, would scarcely have been felt by the Christian, or acknowledged by the infidel, to strengthen the evidence of which we are already in possession.

42. But, to vary the supposition, let us suppose that the narrative wanted, instead of being the work of an Apostle, had been the work of some other contemporary, who writes upon his own original knowledge of the subject, but was not so closely associated with Christ, or his immediate disciples, as to have his history admitted into the canonical scriptures. Had this history been preserved, it would have been transmitted to us in a separate state. It would have stood out from among that collection of writings, which passes under the general name of the New Testament; and the additional evidence thus afforded, would have come down in the form most satisfactory to those with whom we are maintaining our present argument. Yet though, in point of form, the testimony might be more satisfactory; in point of fact, it would be less so. It is the testimony of a less competent witness—a witness who, in the judgment of his contemporaries, wanted those accomplishments which entitled him to a place in the New Testament. There must be some delusion operating upon the understanding, if we think that a circumstance,

which renders an historian less accredited in the eyes of his own age, should render him more accredited in the eyes of posterity. Had Mark been kept out of the New Testament, he would have come down to us in that form, which would have made his testimony more impressive to a superficial inquirer; yet there would be no good reason for keeping him out, but precisely that reason which should render his testimony less impressive. We do not complain of this anxiety for more evidence, and as much of it as possible; but it is right to be told, that the evidence we have is of far more value than the evidence demanded, and that, in the concurrence of four canonical narratives, we see a far more effectual argument for the miracles of the New Testament, than in any number of those separate and extraneous narratives, the want of which is so much felt, and so much complained of.

43. That the New Testament is not one, but a collection of many testimonies, is what has been often said, and often acquiesced in. Yet, even after the argument is formally acceded to, its impression is unfelt; and on this subject there is a great and an obstinate delusion, which not only confirms the infidel in his disregard to Christianity, but even veils the strength of the evidence from its warmest admirers.

44. There is a difference betwixt a mere narrative and a work of speculation or morality. The latter subjects embrace a wider range, admit a great variety of illustration, and are quite endless in their application to the new cases that occur in the ever-changing history of human affairs. The sub-

ject of a narrative again admits of being exhausted. It is limited by the number of actual events. True, we may expatiate upon the character or importance of these events; but, in so doing, we drop the office of the pure historian, for that of the politician, or the moralist, or the divine. The Evangelists give us a very chaste and perfect example of the pure narrative. They never appear in their own persons, or arrest the progress of the history for a single moment, by interposing their own wisdom, or their own piety. A gospel is a bare relation of what has been said or done; and it is evident that, after a few good compositions of this kind, any future attempts would be superfluous and uncalled for.

45. But, in point of fact, these attempts were made. It is to be supposed, that, after the singular events of our Saviour's history, the curiosity of the public would be awakened, and there would be a demand for written accounts of such wonderful transactions. These written accounts were accordingly brought forward. Even in the interval of time betwixt the ascension of our Saviour, and the publication of the earliest gospel, such written histories seem to have been frequent. "Many," says St. Luke, (and in this he is supported by the testimony of subsequent writers,) "have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of these things." Now what has been the fate of all these performances? Such as might have been anticipated. They fell into disuse and oblivion. There is no evil design ascribed to the authors of them. They may have been written with perfect integrity,

and been useful for a short time, and within a limited circle; but, as was natural, they all gave way to the superior authority, and more complete information, of our present narratives. The demand of the christian world was withdrawn from the less esteemed, to the more esteemed histories of our Saviour. The former ceased to be read, and copies of them would be no longer transcribed or multiplied. We cannot find the testimony we are in quest of; not because it was never given, but because the early Christians, who were the most competent judges of that testimony, did not think it worthy of being transmitted to us.

46. But though the number of narratives be necessarily limited by the nature of the subject, there is no such limitation upon works of a moral, didactic, or explanatory kind. Many such pieces have come down to us, both from the apostles themselves, and from the earlier fathers of the church. Now, though the object of these compositions is not to deliver any narrative of the christian miracles, they may perhaps give us some occasional intimation of them. They may proceed upon their reality. We may gather either from incidental passages, or from the general scope of the performance, that the miracles of Christ and his Apostles were recognised, and the divinity of our religion acknowledged, as founded upon these miracles.

47. The first piece of the kind which we meet with, besides the writings of the New Testament, is an epistle ascribed to Barnabas, and, at all events, the production of a man, who lived in the

days of the Apostles. It consists of an exhortation to constancy in the christian profession, a dissuasive from Judaism, and other moral instructions. We shall only give a quotation of a single clause from this work: "And he (*i. e.* our Saviour) making great signs and prodigies to the people of the Jews, they neither believed nor loved him."

48. The next piece in the succession of christian writers, is the undoubted epistle of Clement, the bishop of Rome, to the church of Corinth; and who, by the concurrent voice of all antiquity, is the same Clement who is mentioned in the epistle to the Philippians, as the fellow-labourer of Paul. It is written in the name of the church of Rome; and the object of it is to compose certain dissensions which had arisen in the church of Corinth. It was out of his way to enter into any thing like a formal narrative of the miraculous facts which are to be found in the evangelical history. The subject of his epistle did not lead him to this; and besides, the number and authority of the narratives already published, rendered an attempt of this kind altogether superfluous. Still, however, though a miracle may not be formally announced, it may be brought in incidentally, or it may be proceeded upon, or assumed as the basis of an argument. We give one or two examples of this. In one part of his epistle, he illustrates the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, by the change and progression of natural appearances, and he ushers in this illustration with the following sentence: "Let us consider, my beloved, how the Lord shews us our future resurrection perpetually, of which he made

the Lord Jesus Christ the first-fruits, by raising him from the dead." This incidental way of bringing in the fact of our Lord's resurrection, appears to us the strongest possible form in which the testimony of Clement could have come down to us. It is brought forward in the most confident and unembarrassed manner. He does not stop to confirm this fact by any strong asseveration; nor does he carry, in his manner of announcing it, the most remote suspicion of its being resisted by the incredulity of those to whom he is addressing himself. It wears the air of an acknowledged truth; a thing understood and acquiesced in by all the parties in this correspondence. The direct narrative of the Evangelists gives us their original testimony to the miracles of the gospel. The artless and indirect allusions of the apostolic Fathers, give us not merely their faith in this testimony, but the faith of the whole societies to which they write. They let us see, not merely that such a testimony was given, but that such a testimony was generally believed, and that, too, at a time when the facts in question lay within the memory of living witnesses.

49. In another part, speaking of the Apostles, Clement says, that "receiving the commandments, and being filled with full certainty by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and confirmed by the word of God, with the assurance of the Holy Spirit, they went out announcing the advent of the kingdom of God."

50. It was no object, in those days, for a christian writer to come over the miracles of the New Testament, with the view of lending his formal

and explicit testimony to them. This testimony had already been completed to the satisfaction of the whole christian world. If much additional testimony has not been given, it is because it was not called for. But we ought to see, that every christian writer, in the fact of his being a Christian, in his expressed reverence for the books of the New Testament, and in his numerous allusions to the leading points of the gospel history, has given us satisfying evidence to the truth of the christian miracles, as if he had left behind him a copious and distinct narrative.

51. Of all the miracles of the gospel, it was to be supposed, that the resurrection of our Saviour would be oftenest appealed to; not as an evidence of his being a divine teacher—for that was a point so settled in the mind of every Christian, that a written exposition of the argument was no longer necessary—but as a motive to constancy in the christian profession, and as the great pillar of hope in our own immortality. We accordingly meet with the most free and confident allusions to this fact in the early Fathers. We meet with five intimations of this fact in the undoubted epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians: a father who had been educated by the Apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ.

52. It is quite unnecessary to exhibit passages from the epistles of Ignatius to the same effect, or to pursue the examination downwards through the series of written testimonies. It is enough to announce it as a general fact, that, in the very first age of the christian church, the teachers of this religion

proceeded as confidently upon the reality of Christ's miracles and resurrection, in their addresses to the people, as the teachers of the present day: Or, in other words, that they were as little afraid of being resisted by the incredulity of the people, at a time when the evidence of the facts was accessible to all, and habit and prejudice were against them, as we are of being resisted by the incredulity of an unlettered multitude, who listen to us with all the veneration of a hereditary faith.

53. There are five apostolic Fathers, and a series of christian writers who follow after them in rapid succession. To give an idea to those who are not conversant in the study of ecclesiastical antiquities, how well sustained the chain of testimony is from the first age of Christianity, we shall give a passage from a letter of Irenæus, preserved by Eusebius. We have no less than nine compositions from different authors, which fill up the interval betwixt him and Polycarp; and yet this is the way in which he speaks, in his old age, of the venerable Polycarp, in a letter to Florinus: "I saw you, when I was very young, in the lower Asia, with Polycarp. For I better remember the affairs of that time than those which have lately happened: the things which we learn in our childhood growing up in the soul, and uniting themselves to it. Insomuch, that I can tell the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, and his going out, and coming in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his person, and his discourses to the people; and how he related his conversation with John, and others who had seen the Lord; and how he related their

sayings, and what he had heard from them concerning the Lord, both concerning his miracles and his doctrines, as he had received them from the eye-witnesses of the Word of Life; all which Polycarp related agreeably to the Scriptures. These things I then, through the mercy of God toward me, diligently heard and attended to, recording them not on paper, but upon my heart."

54. We shall pursue this descending series of testimonies no further at present: but it is of importance to remark that the number of actually written testimonies, and of a highly authentic and authoritative character too, by which the facts of the gospel narrative have been handed onward from one generation to another in the history of the Christian Church, greatly exceeds the number of those testimonies which have been preserved to the present day. We are not to infer from the loss and disappearance of many old works, that they were either useless in point of matter, or were devoid of literary worth in point of genius and execution. They may have been in great esteem and great request—both immediately after the time of their appearance, and for some succeeding generations. They may have served a most important purpose by their publication; and, instead of perishing because of their slender or inferior merit, they may have suffered this fate for the very reason why in the present day some of the best and highest works of the land are now perishing from the memory of the existent generation. How few, for example, are there now-a-days, who read the best English writers of two centuries

ago! To come further down, how little the most distinguished British classics at the beginning of the last century are now inquired after! We are not sure if new editions of the Spectator or the Tatler or the Guardian would prove very safe speculations—and this, not because their beauties would not still be relished if only read; but because they are really thrown back, as it were, from the very eyesight of the present age by the prodigious mass of more recent and intermediate authorship which now screens them from our view, and which have really placed in the back-ground, those who were the great masters of taste and criticism in the days of our grandfathers. Such is the perishable nature of literary fame; and that, from the absolute impossibility of reading our way through those authors of more pungent interest who have but recently poured their effusions on the world—to those models of a former age who sat on thrones of literature, in the eye of their contemporaries; and still deserve, if there was time for it, to be as much studied and admired as ever. It is thus that the great poets of a hundred or a hundred and fifty years back are fast vanishing from public observation. The world is wearing out of acquaintance with them. They are falling, not into disesteem; but they are falling into desuetude. Pope, for example, is almost never heard of. We fear that Milton's Paradise Lost is not nearly so much read as it deserves to be. Thomson's Seasons, every paragraph of which is so replete with descriptive power, and who is ever faithful to the truth and the likeness of Nature, even when he throws the

richest flush of poetry over it—seems to be almost as much forgotten, as those buckram pastorals where Corydon and Amaryllis hold converse in cold, though classic phrase; and whose imitations of Greece and Rome are as unlike to any thing that is animated by the freshness of living sentiment, as the mummies of Egypt are unlike to the men and women of our existing society. These great writers are going into rapid oblivion, not because they have been outdone by their successors; but because their successors have taken up the room which themselves occupied, and so have shut them out from the stage of public observation. They are occasionally read of in the writings of their successors; but they are not read. We know them to have been of first-rate eminence; but we scarcely know this at first hand. We catch it by a second or third echo from later authors—in whose pages, however, we observe them mentioned and referred to as the colossal men of their day.

55. Now this principle admits of the strongest application to the case before us. Quadratus, the first apologist we know of for Christianity, was shut out, by the writers who succeeded him—by Justin Martyr, and Tertullian, and Origen, and Eusebius, and Chrysostom, and Jerome, and Augustine. He still lives, it is true; but he lives, only in the collections or extracts of one of his followers. He may have been illustrious in his day; and yet in a century or two may have fallen into disuse, not in consequence of any discredit that he had incurred, but simply by an act of dispossession. The authors who came after, stood

between him and the readers of a future age; and they multiplied beyond the demand and even the power of many to peruse them—so as to accumulate a literature that became too much for the means of any student to overtake. In these circumstances, many authors, and valuable ones too, were unavoidably superseded. For the cause now referred to bears a far more emphatic application to the authors of that period, than to those of the present day—when, on the one hand, books were expensive and would not be purchased beyond the more urgent needs of those who made use of them; and on the other hand, the operose manufacture, not of printing but of copying by the pen, would not be undertaken for the production of an article that after all was found to be unsaleable. In such a state of things, there is no saying what luminaries may have been extinguished along the track of ages—what men of power and of achievement in their day may have now been utterly lost sight of—what proud literary honours may now be lying prostrate in forgetfulness—what authors who have enjoyed their little hour, not of meretricious but of solid and well-earned celebrity, whose works and even whose names have long perished from the memory of the world. It is affecting to view such a termination for that highest of all human greatness—the greatness of mind, and of the mind's performances. When we see how precarious that immortality is which is the boasted reward of genius, the ambition of a name in literature might well die within the breast. It should give place to that higher ambition which prompts man to

seek after a real and not a fancied immortality. But we cannot afford at present to expatiate on the moral of this contemplation. Our immediate object is to illustrate a principle which has not been much adverted to, though it serves to explain a phenomenon in the history of books and the history of literature—exemplified among writers of all sorts, and among none more than those who have signalized themselves in their day in the defence or illustration of the christian faith. It is a principle which will serve to account for the destruction of much that is precious, as well as of much that is worthless in authorship.*

*The following extract from the Edinburgh Review for March, 1819, is, we believe, the production of the masterly pen of Francis Jeffrey :—

"Next to the impression of the vast fertility, compass, and beauty of our English poetry, the reflection that recurs most frequently and forcibly to us in accompanying Mr C. through his wide survey, is that of the perishable nature of poetical fame, and the speedy oblivion that has overtaken so many of the promised heirs of immortality. Of near two hundred and fifty authors, whose works are cited in these volumes, by far the greatest part of whom were celebrated in their generation, there are not thirty who now enjoy any thing that can be called popularity—whose works are to be found in the hands of ordinary readers—in the shops of ordinary booksellers—or in the press for publication. About fifty more may be tolerably familiar to men of taste or literature :—the rest slumber on the shelves of collectors, and are partially known to a few antiquaries and scholars. Now, the fame of a poet is popular, or nothing. He does not address himself, like the man of science, to the learned, or those who desire to learn, but to all mankind ; and his purpose being to delight and be praised, necessarily extends to all who can receive pleasure, or join in applause. It is strange, and somewhat humiliating, to see how great a proportion of those who had once fought their way successfully to distinction, and surmounted the rivalry of contemporary envy, have again sunk into neglect. We have great deference for public opinion ; and readily admit, that nothing but what is good can be permanently popular. But though its *vivat* be generally oracular, its *pereat* appears to us to

56. Now is the time to exhibit to full advantage the argument which the different epistles of the New Testament afford. They are, in fact, so many

be often sufficiently capricious; and while we would foster all that it bids to live, we would willingly revive much that it leaves to die. The very multiplication of works of amusement, necessarily withdraws many from notice that deserve to be kept in remembrance; for we should soon find it labour, and not amusement, if we were obliged to make use of them all, or even to take all upon trial. As the materials of enjoyment and instruction accumulate around us, more and more must thus be daily rejected, and left to waste: for while our tasks lengthen, our lives remain as short as ever; and the calls on our time multiply, while our time itself is flying swiftly away. This superfluity and abundance of our treasures, therefore, necessarily renders much of them worthless; and the veriest accidents may, in such a case, determine what part shall be preserved, and what thrown away and neglected. When an army is *decimated*, the very bravest may fall; and many poets, worthy of eternal remembrance, have been forgotten, merely because there was not room in our memories for all.

"By such a work as the present, however, this injustice of fortune may be partly redressed—some small fragments of an immortal strain may still be rescued from oblivion—and a wreck of a name preserved, which time appeared to have swallowed up for ever. There is something pious we think, and endearing, in the office of thus gathering up the ashes of renown that has passed away; or rather, of calling back the departed life for a transitory glow, and enabling those great spirits which seemed to be *laid* for ever still to draw a tear of pity, or a throb of admiration, from the hearts of a forgetful generation. The body of their poetry, probably, can never be revived; but some sparks of its spirit may yet be preserved in a narrower and feebler frame.

"When we look back upon the havoc which two hundred years have thus made in the ranks of our immortals—and, above all, when we refer their rapid disappearance, to the quick succession of new competitors, and the accumulation of more good works than there is time to peruse,—we cannot help being dismayed at the prospect which lies before the writers of the present day. There never was an age so prolific of popular poetry as that in which we now live:—and as wealth, population, and education extend, the produce is likely to go on increasing. The last ten years have produced, we think, an annual supply of about ten thousand lines, of good staple poetry—poetry from the very first hands that we can boast of—that runs quickly to three or four large editions—and is as likely to be permanent as present

distinct and additional testimonies. If the testimonies drawn from the writings of the christian Fathers are calculated to make any impression, then the testimonies of these epistles, where there is no delusion, and no prejudice in the mind of the inquirer, must make a greater impression. They are more ancient, and were held to be of greater authority by competent judges. They were held sufficient by the men of those days, who were nearer to the sources of evidence; and they ought, therefore, to be held sufficient by us. The early persecuted Christians had too great an interest in

success can make it. Now, if this goes on for a hundred years longer, what a task will await the poetical readers of 1919! Our living poets will then be nearly as old as Pope and Swift are at present—but there will stand between them and that generation nearly ten times as much fresh and fashionable poetry as is now interposed between us and those writers:—and if Scott and Byron and Campbell have already cast Pope and Swift a good deal into the shade, in what form and dimensions are they themselves likely to be presented to the eyes of their great-grandchildren? The thought, we own, is a little appalling;—and we confess we see nothing better to imagine than that they may find a comfortable place in some new collection of specimens—the centenary of the present publication. There—if the future editor have any thing like the indulgence and veneration for antiquity of his predecessor—there shall posterity still hang with rapture on the half of Campbell—and the fourth part of Byron—and the sixth of Scott—and the scattered tithes of Crabbe—and the three *per cent.* of Southey,—while some good-natured critic shall sit in our mouldering chair, and more than half prefer them to those by whom they have been superseded!—It is an hyperbole of good nature, however, we fear, to ascribe to them even these dimensions of the end of a century. After a lapse of 250 years, we are afraid to think of the space they may have shrunk into. We have no Shakspeare, alas! to shed a never-setting light on his contemporaries:—and if we continue to write and rhyme at the present rate for 200 years longer, there must be some new art of short-hand reading invented, or all reading will be given up in despair. We need not distress ourselves, however, with these afflictions of our posterity;—and it is quite time that the reader should know a little of the work before us."

the grounds of their faith, to make a light and superficial examination. We may safely commit the decision to them; and the decision they have made is, that the authors of the different epistles in the New Testament, were worthier of their confidence, as witnesses of the truth, than the authors of those compositions which were left out of the collection, and maintain, in our eye, the form of a separate testimony. By what unaccountable tendency is it, that we feel disposed to reverse this decision, and to repose more faith in the testimony of subsequent and less esteemed writers? Is there any thing in the confidence given to Peter and Paul by their contemporaries, which renders them unworthy of ours? or, is the testimony of their writings less valuable and less impressive, because the Christians of old have received them as the best vouchers of their faith?

57. It gives us a far more satisfying impression than ever of the truth of our religion, when, in addition to several distinct and independent narratives of its history, we meet with a number of contemporaneous productions addressed to different societies, and all proceeding upon the truth of that history, as an agreed and unquestionable point amongst the different parties in the correspondence. Had that history been a fabrication, in what manner, we ask, would it have been followed up by the subsequent compositions of those numerous agents in the work of deception? How comes it, that they have betrayed no symptom of that insecurity which it would have been so natural to feel in their circumstances? Through the whole of these

Epistles, we see nothing like the awkward or embarrassed air of impostors. We see no anxiety, either to mend or to confirm the history that had already been given. We see no contest which they might have been called upon to maintain with the incredulity of their converts, as to the miracles of the Gospel. We see the most intrepid remonstrance against errors of conduct, or discipline, or doctrine. This savours strongly of upright and independent teachers. But is it not a most striking circumstance, that, amongst the severe reckonings which St. Paul had with some of his churches, he was never once called upon to school their doubts, or their suspicions, as to the reality of the christian miracles? This is a point universally acquiesced in; and, from the general strain of these Epistles, we collect, not merely the testimony of their authors, but the unsuspected testimony of all to whom they addressed themselves.

58. And let it never be forgotten, that the Christians who composed these churches, were in every way well qualified to be arbiters in this question. They had the first authorities within their reach. The five hundred who, Paul says to them, had seen our Saviour after his resurrection, could be sought after; and, if not to be found, Paul would have had his assertion to answer for. In some cases, they were the first authorities themselves, and had therefore no confirmation to go in search of. He appeals to the miracles which had been wrought among them, and in this way he commits the question to their own experience. He asserts this to the Galatians; and at the very time,

too, that he is delivering against them a most severe and irritating invective. He intimates the same thing repeatedly to the Corinthians; and after he had put his honesty to so severe a trial, does he betray any insecurity as to his character and reputation amongst them? So far from this, in arguing the general doctrine of the resurrection from the dead as the most effectual method of securing assent to it, he rests the main part of the argument upon their confidence in his fidelity as a witness. "But if there be no resurrection from the dead, then is Christ not risen.—Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." Where, we ask, would have been the mighty charm of this argument, if Paul's fidelity had been questioned? and how shall we account for the free and intrepid manner in which he advances it, if the miracles which he refers to, as wrought among them, had been nullities of his own invention?

59. For the truth of the gospel history, we can appeal to one strong and unbroken series of testimonies from the days of the Apostles. But the great strength of the evidence lies in that effulgence of testimony, which enlightens this history at its commencement—in the number of its original witnesses—in the distinct and independent records which they left behind them—and in the undoubted faith they bore among the numerous societies which they instituted. The concurrence of the apostolic Fathers, and their immediate successors, forms a very strong and a very satisfying argument; but

let it be further remembered, that out of the materials which compose, if we may be allowed the expression, the original charter of our faith, we can select a stronger body of evidence than it is possible to form out of the whole mass of subsequent testimonies.

60. Before closing our account of the testimony of subsequent witnesses, we would advert shortly to the strong virtual though unwritten testimony that is implied in the consent of the many thousands of converts to the faith of the gospel, and the unquestioned oral tradition by which the history of its origin was handed forward from one generation to another. This evidence afforded by the ancient people of the church, is altogether distinct and additional to that which we gather from the fathers of the church. When one ancient author witnesses for another; and is himself nearly as remote from the age in which we live, he too is generally propped or supported by succeeding testimonies, even as his predecessor—and thus it is, that, each, in the train of some one that went before him, is also himself followed by a train of those who came after him. There is in this way a broad and magnificent stream of light from the New Testament Scriptures to the present age—made up of all those separate lines of light which issue from each of the individual witnesses—a chain of evidence, in which each writer adds, as it were, a fibre of his own, and contributes a portion to the bulk and strength of the whole—a crowd of report-

ers along the pathway of descending ages, who stand in such close and continuous succession, that each is in full hearing of his neighbour's voice and can transmit in turn his own credible testimony to those who occupy the place beneath him in the ladder of history. There is no other instance of such a sustained and solid conveyance, as that by which the facts of the christian story have travelled downwards to the present hour—nor can any profane author be named who hath come to us along the track of centuries, by such numerous and such firm stepping-stones. It were interesting to be presented with comparative tabellated views upon this subject—to have a series of all the notices which can be collected from all authors before the age of printing to the writings of Cæsar or Cicero, and reckon them along with a similar series of notices to the writings of the Evangelists or of St. Paul. On every principle of what is deemed to be sound criticism, when estimating the genuineness of ancient compositions in ordinary literature, would it be found that the sacred outweigh the profane authors a hundredfold; and when one thinks of the unhesitating faith that is reposed, both in the existence of those Roman personages whom we have just named, and in the general authenticity of their writings—one cannot but wonder at the lingering incredulity, and at length the slow assent, even of the friends of Christianity, in the veracity of the New Testament, and the trustworthiness of the innumerable depositions, bearing every mark of honesty, which can be alleged in its favour.

61. But this written testimony is very far from being all which can be appealed to for the truth of the gospel narrative. We speak not of the very peculiar circumstances, under which the written testimony of apostolic men and of christian fathers was given; and how they sealed their integrity by their sufferings in the cause: But, apart from all written evidence whatever, we should think on the evidence of that uncontrolled oral tradition which is nearly all that can be alleged for some of the most esteemed authors of antiquity. When Cicero wrote, there could be no mistake either as to the works or as to their author, at the time of the publication; and, apart from any other taking up the pen and transmitting a written voucher in their behalf, we can easily imagine that they would be handed to the immediately succeeding generation, as the undoubted compositions of the man whose name was prefixed to them, and whom every one knew to have been great in talent, and great in the public and political history of his times. That generation might have received them as they got them, and handed them onward on the same terms to their immediate posterity. And thus, independently of other authors, they might have been carried forward on a stream of unquestioned tradition, never contradicted and never doubted—and so coming down to us in the undisturbed possession of a hereditary esteem which of itself, and more especially when accompained by the internal marks of credibility in the subject-matter of the volumes, would perpetuate the credit of them, and so as that we should never think of inquiring about the testimony either of

contemporary or intermediate writers. Independently of all written documents, there is a vast deal of information carried forward on the vehicle of an uninterrupted hearsay; and who can doubt that the various pieces of the New Testament had this sort of tradition to help on their conveyance from generation to generation? That is a remarkable testimony of Irenæus, when he says—"that the tradition of the Apostles hath spread itself over the whole universe; and all they who search after the sources of truth will find this tradition to be held sacred in every church. We might enumerate all those who have been appointed bishops to these churches by the Apostles, and all their successors up to our days. It is by this uninterrupted succession that we have received the tradition which actually exists in the church, as also the doctrines of truth as it was preached by the apostles." Superadded then to the copious written testimony which has been collected by Lardner, there is a virtual and most effective testimony in the oral conveyance of historical truth from one age to another; and for the integrity of which, we have the best guarantees in the tradition of the early Christians. This tradition, in fact, is tantamount to the testimony of whole multitudes who had no possible interest, either in deceiving or in being deceived; and with whom the authority of those scriptures, on the faith of which they embarked all their hopes in eternity and braved the most fearful hazards in time, was a prime concern. Never, we may rest assured, did the stream of tradition flow purer, than through those ages of a suffering and persecuted church, which lay between the

commencement of our religion and its establishment in the days of Constantine. In support of the Scriptures, there is a continuous and increasing light of written testimony, far surpassing all that can be adduced in behalf of any ancient authors; but a reflecting mind will acknowledge that in the oral tradition of a sincere and suffering and vigilant people, there is a chain of still closer and firmer continuity. And when one thinks of so many separate and diverging chains, throughout the various churches of the world—yet all landing in the harmonious result of the same scriptures as the rule of our faith and practice—it affords a multiplicity of evidence, not only for the age and authority of these books, but for the certainty of their informations, which is altogether unexampled.

62. Nor should we here omit another species of testimony which, though also unwritten and inarticulate, affords a powerful evidence on the side of revelation. We refer to the credibility which the institutions of the Jewish and Christian religions impart to the origin of both. This has been well unfolded in that admirable little tract, entitled "Leslie's Short and Easy Method with the Deists" —in which, by means of a plain yet most effective argument that is exceedingly well put, he embodies as it were the faith of past history in certain observances that are acted before our eyes. He in the first place exhibits with great force, how impossible it is, that the faith of contemporaries could be carried, in any miraculous if pretended facts said to have been performed in the midst of them, and if of such a nature as that many must have seen and all must

have heard of them. And in the second place, he demonstrates with equal force, how impossible it were, to carry the faith of their descendants in any age after them, in the genuineness of any memorials said to have been instituted in celebration of these miraculous events immediately after they happened —but in fact newly instituted, with the view to palm a false history on the credulity of the public. The Jewish passover, for example, is said to have been instituted in commemoration of that awful miracle, the death in one night of all the first-born in the land of Egypt; and at a time when the event, if true, must have been fresh in the recollection of all the children of Israel. The argument of Leslie goes most satisfactorily to show—that, if the miracle was not true, and the passover was not instituted at the time of its having taken place—then it was just as impossible to introduce it at any future age in connexion with the story, as to make the story itself be believed in the age when it was alleged to have happened. So that this established rite, this great annual solemnity, transmitted from generation to generation, becomes a permanent witness for the truth of the circumstances in which it is said to have originated. And, tracing the history of this observation upwards, we can stop at no point later than the miraculous story which it authenticates, at which it would have been possible to have gained for it the credit and consent of the Jewish people: And, when we do attain this summit, when we thus carry back the institution close to the great event which it professes to commemorate—we then meet with the equal impossibility of forcing their acceptance

of the institution, without their previous belief and acceptance of the story; or lastly of forcing that belief, without a story, of so palpable and public a nature, being actually true.*

* The rules applied by Leslie to this investigation are the four following—"First, That the matter of fact be such, that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears may be judges of it. 2d, That it be done publicly in the face of the world. 3d, That not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions be performed. 4th, That such monuments, or such actions and observances as be instituted, do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done."

"The two first rules make it impossible for any such matter of fact to be imposed upon men at the time when such matter of fact was said to be done; because every man's eyes and senses would contradict it."

"Therefore it only remains that such matter of fact might be invented some time after, when the men of that generation wherein the thing was said to be done are all past and gone, and the credulity of after ages might be imposed upon to believe that things were done in former ages which were not.

"And for this the two last rules secure us as much as the two first rules in the former case."

He applies these rules with great good effect to the histories both of Moses and Christ. The chief Jewish memorials which he notices are the Feast of the Passover—Aaron's Rod—the Pot of Manna—the Brazen Serpent—the Feast of Pentecost—the Sabbath—the Sacrifices—the Feasts and Fasts in general—the tribe of Levi—the stones at Gilgal.

His treatment of the last of these memorials may be given as a fair specimen of his whole argument.

"Now to frame our argument, let us suppose, that there never was any such thing as that passage over Jordan—that these stones at Gilgal were set up upon some other occasion in some after age—and then that some designing man invented this book of Joshua, and said that it was writ by Joshua at that time, and gave this stoneage at Gilgal for a testimony of the truth of it—would not every body say to him, we know this stoneage at Gilgal, but we never heard before of this reason for it, nor of this book of Joshua. Where has it been all this while? And where and how came you after so many ages to find it? Besides this book tells us that this passage over Jordan was ordained to be taught our children from age to age; and therefore that they were always to be instructed in the meaning of that stoneage at Gilgal as a memorial of it. But we were never taught it when we were children, nor did ever

63. He applies this argument with great effect to Christianity, which has its Sabbath, and its standing ministry, and its Baptism, and its Sacrament of the Supper—all of them coeval with itself; and the last of them especially commemorative, not merely of the death of our Saviour, but in the words by which we are enjoined to "do this till he come again" commemorative also of his resurrection. The annual celebrations of this solemnity may be regarded, then, as the stepping-stones, by which the tradition of this great miracle has descended on sure footing from the first age of the gospel to the time in which we live. It has moved downward for nearly two thousand years on a solid pathway—handed from one to another, in a progression that could not possibly have commenced later than the age of the Apostles; and could not possibly have commenced then, without the general faith of a persecuted and therefore a pure and an upright church, in an event about which it was impossible to deceive them.

teach our children any such thing; and it is not likely that thing could have been forgotten, while so remarkable a stoneage did continue which was set up for that and no other end."

"The matters of fact of Mahomet, or what is fabled of the heathen deities, do all want some of the aforesaid rules, whereby the certainty of matters of fact is demonstrated."

"I do not say that every thing which wants these four marks is false; but that nothing can be false which has them all."

The Essay altogether is terse and powerful, and one of the happiest specimens in existence of good wholesome English argument.

There are certain other material vestiges of the truth of Revelation, by the investigation of which we should break up a new and a rich mine of evidence in its favour. We refer to coins and medals, and architectural monuments, confirmatory of the Jewish and Christian histories, and more especially of the facts connected with the origin of the latter dispensation.

CHAPTER VI.

On the secure and impregnable Character of the Historical Argument for the Truth of Christianity.

1. If there be one thing more distinctive of all that is sound in our Modern Philosophy than another, it is the respect which it maintains throughout for the evidence of observation. Now the original witnesses of the gospel had the evidence of observation for the truth of its recorded miracles. And to us of the present day, it comes in the shape of observation at second hand—coming as it does through the medium of a testimony altogether unexampled in strength and sureness. The office of history is to inform us, not of that which has fallen under the observation of our own senses, but of that which has fallen under the observation of the senses of other men—and, if only transmitted to us by a sure pathway, then, though it may be termed derivative rather than direct or primary observation, yet may it claim the same rightful authority over all that is of a conjectural character, which is now allowed at all hands to the evidence of facts over the gratuitous fancies of Theory or Speculation. And it does give a more entire character of purely observational evidence to the evidence of testimony, that beside reporting to us the observation of others, it is upon observation of our own, upon the experience we have had of the

characters of truth and falsehood in other men, that we immediately pass our judgment on the credibility of any narrative which may happen to be submitted to us. This is one good effect of proving the faith of testimony to be resolvable into the faith of experience. It gives, out and out, to the evidence for the miracles of the gospel, the character of a solid experimental and Baconian evidence—and as much superior to the hypothetical imaginations which have been opposed to it, as are the certainties of that *terra firma* which is within the circle of observation, to the plausibilities however ingenious of that *terra incognita* which is bevond it.

2. After having attained this secure vantage-ground, we have only to make a right use of its capabilities in order to disperse certain phantoms which Infidelity has conjured up from a dim and inaccessible region. Perhaps the two most notable examples of this are—first, the presumption on which the enemies of revelation have attempted to discredit it, because of its imagined incongruity with their geological speculations—second the presumption on which a similar attempt has been made, because of the imagined incongruity between the Theology of the Bible and the Theology of Nature. The one presumption is fetched from a distant antiquity, and supposes an acquaintance with the secrets of a physical history that no human spectator witnessed, and of which no human record has been transmitted to us. The other presumption is fetched from an obscurity profounder still, and supposes an acquaintance

with the mysteries of the spiritual world of which the duration reaches from Eternity to Eternity; and which besides, as much surpasses the audacity of the former presumption, as the dimensions of our single earth are surpassed by the dimensions of the universe. Meanwhile we have a stable historical, or, which is really tantamount to this, a stable observational evidence for the miracles of the New Testament; and it only remains to be shown, how this enables us to stand our ground against sceptical geologists on the one hand, and sceptical theists upon the other.

3. I. There are certain late speculations in geology which give the example of a distant and unconnected circumstance, being suffered to cast an unmerited disgrace over the whole of our argument. They give a higher antiquity to the world, than most of those who read the Bible had any conception of. Admit this antiquity; and in what possible way does it touch upon the historical evidence for the New Testament? The credibility of the gospel miracles stands upon its own appropriate foundation, the recorded testimony of numerous and unexceptionable witnesses. The only way in which we can overthrow that credibility is by attacking the testimony, or disproving the authenticity of the record. Every other science is tried upon its own peculiar evidences: and all we contend for is, that the same justice be done to theology. When a mathematician offers to apply his reasoning to the phenomena of mind, the votaries of moral science resent it as an invasion, and make their appeal to the evidence of

consciousness. When an amateur of botany, upon some vague analogies, offers his confident affirmations as to the structure and parts of the human body, there would be an instantaneous appeal to the knife and demonstrations of the anatomist. Should a mineralogist, upon the exhibition of an ingenious or well-supported theory, pronounce upon the history of our Saviour and his miracles, we should call it another example of an arbitrary and unphilosophical extension of principles beyond the field of their legitimate application. We should appeal to the kind and the quantity of testimony upon which that history is supported. We might suffer ourselves to be delighted by the brilliancy, or even convinced by the evidence of his speculations; but we should feel, that the history of those facts which form the groundwork of our faith, is as little affected by them, as the history of any storm, or battle, or warrior, which has come down to us in the most genuine and approved records of past ages.

4. But, whatever be the external evidence of testimony, or however strong may be its visible characters of truth and honesty, is not the falsehood or the contradiction which we may detect in the subject of that testimony sufficient to discredit it? Had we been original spectators of our Saviour's miracles, we must have had as strong a conviction of their reality, as it is in the power of testimony to give us. Had we been the eye-witnesses of his character and history, and caught from actual observation the impression of his worth —the internal proofs, that no jugglery or falsehood

could have been intended, would have been certainly as strong as the internal proofs which are now exhibited to us, and which consist in the simplicity of the narrative, and that tone of perfect honesty which pervades, in a manner so distinct and intelligible, every composition of the Apostles. Yet, with all these advantages, if Jesus Christ had asserted as a truth, what we confidently knew to be a falsehood; had he, for example, upon the strength of his prophetical endowments, pronounced upon the secrets of a person's age, and told us, that he was thirty, when we knew him to be forty, would not this have made us stumble at all his pretensions, and, in spite of every other argument and appearance, would we not have withdrawn our confidence from him as a teacher from God? This, we allow, would have been a most serious dilemma. It would have been that state of neutrality which admits of nothing positive or satisfying on either side of the question; or, rather, what is still more distressing, which gives us the most positive and satisfactory appearances on both sides. We could not abandon the truth of the miracles, because we saw them. Could we give them up, we should determine on a positive rejection, and our minds would feel repose in absolute infidelity. But as the case stands, it is scepticism. There is nothing like it in any other department of inquiry. We can appeal to no actual example; but a student of natural science may be made to understand the puzzle, when we ask him, how he would act, if the experiments, which he conducts under the most perfect sameness of circum-

stances, were to land him in opposite results? He would vary and repeat his experiments; he would try to detect the inconsistency; and would rejoice, if he at last found, that the difficulty lay in the errors of his own observation, and not in the inexplicable nature of the subject. All this he would do in anxious and repeated endeavours, before he inferred that nature persevered in no law, and that that constancy, which is the foundation of all science, was perpetually broke in upon by the most capricious and unlooked for appearances; before he would abandon himself to scepticism, and pronounce philosophy to be an impossible attainment.

5. It is our part to imitate this example. If Jesus Christ has, on the one hand, performed miracles, and sustained in the whole tenor of his history the character of a prophet, and, on the other hand, asserted to be true, what we undeniably know to be a falsehood, this is a dilemma which we are called upon to resolve by every principle, that can urge the human mind in the pursuit of liberal inquiry. It is not enough to say, that the phenomena in question do not fall within the dominion of philosophy; and we therefore leave them as a fair exercise and amusement to commentators. The mathematician may say, and has said, the same thing of the moralist; yet there are moralists in the world, who will prosecute their speculations in spite of him: and, what is more, there are men who take a wider survey than either; who rise above these professional prejudices; and will allow that, in each department of inquiry, the

subjects which offer are entitled to a candid and respectful consideration. The naturalist may pronounce the same rapid judgment upon the difficulties of the theologian; yet there ever will be theologians who feel a peculiar interest in their subject; and, we trust, that there ever will be men, with a higher grasp of mind than either the mere theologian, or the mere naturalist, who are ready to acknowledge the claims of truth in every quarter—who are superior to that narrow contempt, which has made such an unhappy and malignant separation among the different orders of scientific men—who will examine the evidences of the gospel history, and, if they are found to be sufficient, will view the miracles of our Saviour with the same liberal and philosophic curiosity with which they would contemplate any grand phenomenon in the moral history of the species. If there really appear, on the face of this investigation, to be such a difficulty as the one in question, a philosopher of the order we are now describing will make many an anxious effort to extricate himself; he will not soon acquiesce in a scepticism, of which there is no other example in the wide field of human speculation; he will either make out the insufficiency of the historical evidence, or prove that the falsehood ascribed to Jesus Christ has no existence. He will try to dispose of one of the terms of the alleged contradiction, before he can prevail upon himself to admit both, and deliver his mind to a state of uncertainty, most painful to those who respect truth in all her departments.

6. We offer the above observations, not so

much for the purpose of doing away a difficulty which we conscientiously believe to have no existence, as for the purpose of exposing the rapid, careless, and unphilosophical procedure of some enemies to the christian argument. They, in the first instance, take up the rapid assumption, that Jesus Christ has, either through himself, or his immediate Disciples, made an assertion as to the antiquity of the globe, which, upon the faith of their geological speculations, they know to be a falsehood. After having fastened this stain upon the subject of the testimony, they, by one summary act of the understanding, lay aside all the external evidence for the miracles and general character of our Saviour. They will not wait to be told, that this evidence is a distinct subject of examination; and that, if actually attended to, it will be found much stronger than the evidence of any other fact or history which has come down to us in the written memorials of past ages. If this evidence is to be rejected, it must be rejected on its own proper grounds; but if all positive testimony, and all sound reasoning upon human affairs, go to establish it, then the existence of such proof is a phenomenon which remains to be accounted for, and must ever stand in the way of positive infidelity. Until we dispose of it, we can carry our opposition to the claims of our religion, no farther than to the length of an ambiguous and mid-way scepticism. By adopting a decisive infidelity, we reject a testimony, which, of all others, has come down to us in the most perfect and unsuspicious form. We lock up a source of evidence, which is often repaired to in

other questions of science and history. We cut off the authority of principles, which, if once exploded, will not terminate in the solitary mischief of darkening and destroying our theology, but will shed a baleful uncertainty over many of the most interesting speculations on which the human mind can expatiate.

7. Even admitting, then, this single objection in the subject of our Saviour's testimony, the whole length to which we can legitimately carry the objection, is scepticism, or that dilemma of the mind into which it is thrown by two contradictory appearances. This is the unavoidable result of admitting both terms in the alleged contradiction. Upon the strength of all the reasoning which has hitherto occupied us, we challenge the infidel to dispose of the one term, which lies in the strength of the historical evidence. But in different ways we may dispose of the other, which lies in the alleged falsehood of our Saviour's testimony. We may deny the truth of the geological speculation; nor is it necessary to be an accomplished geologist, that we may be warranted to deny it. We appeal to the speculations of the geologists themselves. They neutralize one another, and leave us in possession of free ground for the informations of the Old Testament. Our imaginations have been much regaled by the brilliancy of their speculations; but they are so opposite to each other, that we now cease to be impressed by their evidence. But there are other ways of disposing of the supposed falsehood of our Saviour's testimony. Does he really assert what has been called the Mosaical

antiquity of the world? It is true, that he gives his distinct testimony to the divine legation of Moses; but does Moses ever say, that when God created the heavens and the earth, he did more at the time alluded to than transform them out of previously existing materials? Or does he ever say, that there was not an interval of many ages betwixt the first act of creation, described in the first verse of the book of Genesis, and said to have been performed at the *beginning;* and those more detailed operations, the account of which commences at the second verse, and which are described to us as having been performed in so many days? Or, finally, does he ever make us to understand, that the genealogies of man went any farther than to fix the antiquity of the species, and, of consequence, that they left the antiquity of the globe a free subject for the speculations of philosophers?—We do not pledge ourselves for the truth of one or all of these suppositions. Nor is it necessary that we should. It is enough that any of them is infinitely more rational than the rejection of Christianity in the face of its historical evidence. This historical evidence remains in all the obstinacy of experimental and well-attested facts; and as there are so many ways of expunging the other term in the alleged contradiction, we appeal to every enlightened reader, if it is at all candid or philosophical to suffer it to stand.*

8. Respecting the infidelity which has been raised on this particular ground, it may well be

* On this subject see further Chap. II. Book II. of our Natural Theology.

remarked, that the danger which a country runs from an incursion of its enemies, is not always in proportion to the number of the invaders. There is another element, besides the mere number of them, which must enter into the calculation; and that is, the unity of their movements. If it be found that the operations of the different armies counteract and neutralize one another; or that when one of the commanders resolves upon a particular method of attack, another of them not only withdraws his concurrence, but puts forth his strength to resist it—then the country may remain untouched and unhurt amid all this parade of hostility; and, in addition to the consciousness of her own strength, she derives a fresh security from the mutual jealousies of those who are opposed to her.

9. The strength of the Christian argument has never been brought fairly into contest with the speculations of Geology. These speculations are almost entirely constructed upon presently existing appearances; for they are but very slightly modified by the very slender materials which have come down to us in the records of past times. Let us suppose that a very ancient record of geological facts were discovered, with the most conclusive marks of authenticity upon it, and that it gave the lie to the most popular and accepted theory of the present day. The circumstance of that theory, being the most probable of all those which had been started upon the facts within our reach, would not be suffered for a moment to exclude the new information which had broke in upon us. It were a sad transgression upon the inductive philosophy

to refuse this information, with not another reason to set it aside, than that it is inconsistent with our theory. The information must be received, if it have enough of its own appropriate evidence to make it credible—even the evidence of history. A man of true philosophical habits would be thankful for it, and if a theory must be got up, he would accommodate it to the wider field of induction which lay before him.

10. Now, it is not necessary that the author of the record in question be a naturalist by profession. Julius Cæsar may have chosen to give us the height of the cliffs at Dover, and have gratified our present geologists by giving them to understand that the actual degradation of these precipices is as rapid or as slow as they have conceived it; or he may have puzzled them with a piece of information totally unlooked for upon this subject, and sent them a-seeking after consistency to their speculations about the alteration of level in the sea, or the inequalities of that expansive and elevating power, which they fancy to be at work under the surface of the globe.

11. Moses is not a naturalist by profession; but, in the course of his narrative, he brings forward facts which may confirm or may falsify the speculations of naturalists. Strange mixture of credulity and scepticism! that the slender plausibilities of theory should have such influence upon the one, while the competency of Moses as an historian, should make no impression upon the other. If these two principles existed in different minds, it would fail to astonish us. But that there

should be room in the same mind for so much facility of conviction on the one hand, and such an obstinate resistance to evidence on the other, is just one of those perversities of infidelity, which serve both to illustrate the history, and to lay open the principle, of its melancholy delusions.

12. Nor is it necessary to assert in positive terms, the competency of Moses as an historian. It is enough to bring it forward as a point which must be disposed of, before geologists can have free room to expatiate upon that field of inquiry on which they have ventured themselves. If, by the labour of a sound and patient criticism, they can succeed in deposing the Jewish legislator from a place among the accredited historians of other days, every lover of truth will thank them for the new light they have thrown on this very interesting question. But till this be accomplished, the testimony of Moses remains a drawback to all their theories; and it is just as unphilosophical to withhold their attention from his narrative, as it would be for theorists in chemistry to refuse a hearing to him, who offers to arrest the progress of their speculations by the narrative of his actual experiments.

13. The credibility of Moses as an historian is the right weapon for defending the integrity of our faith against the inroads of geological speculation. The tone of truth, and the consistency which pervade his narrative; the solemn reverence for the God of truth which animates the whole of it; its uncontrolled credit with the Jewish people in spite of all its severities against them; the likely origin which

it assigns to institutions kept up by the nation to the latest period of their history, and which no artifice could have introduced at an age subsequent to that of the historian himself; the united testimony of Jews and Christians, that best guarantee for the integrity of the copies since the days of our Saviour; and above all the express testimony of our Saviour himself, bringing the whole authority of His religion, with the full weight of its wonderful and unexampled evidences, to the support of the Mosaic narrative—these are the mighty bulwarks which stand in secure defiance against the visions of Geology, and out of which we may cast a fearless eye over the mustering hostility of its aërial and ever-shifting speculations.

14. But we must not forget that the geologists are nearly unanimous on one point—the far superior antiquity of this globe to the commonly received date of it, as taken from the writings of Moses. What shall we make of this? We may feel a security as to those points in which they differ, and, confronting them with one another, may remain safe and untouched between them. But when they agree, this security fails. There is scarcely any neutralization of authority among them as to the age of the world; and Cuvier, with his catastrophes and his epochs, leaves the popular opinion nearly as far behind him, as they who trace our present continent upwards through an indefinite series of ancestors, and assign many millions of years to the existence of each generation. In a chapter of our Natural Theology to which we have already referred, we have conceded this antiquity of the globe, and explained

the grounds on which we hold it to be reconcileable with the literalities of the book of Genesis.

15. II. The second objection or class of objections to Christianity which we think the Historical Evidence fully able to overbear is grounded on the conceived incongruities between the Theology of the Bible and the Theology of Nature. Now whatever light the Theology of Nature may cast, and we think it casts a great deal, on the perfections of the divine character, and more especially His moral perfections—we hold it to be altogether incompetent for judging on the procedure of the divine administration. We may estimate aright the *principles* of His government, without being able to judge of its *policy;* or of the particular measures by which these principles are carried out into their best possible manifestation and effect. Our conscience may tell us of the one, and fully warrant us in saying—"just and true art thou, O God." But the vastness and variety of His superintendance, whether as respects the eternity of its duration or the immensity of its sphere, may utterly disqualify us from pronouncing on the other. So that when a professed Revelation announces certain counsels or certain forthgoings of the Divinity, we are altogether unable, on any cognizance that we may take of their character or tendency, to say that "just and true are all these ways."*

* "Just and true are thy ways," Rev. xv. 3. This might well be said by those to whom the day of the revelation of hidden things has come, and to whom the mystery of God is finished—or who have witnessed its fulfilment. Previous to that great and

It is true they might be commended to our acceptance on the strength of those credentials by which the Revelation is accompanied. But they do not on that account commend themselves—nor are we entitled, on any perception by us of their intrinsic character, to found either an evidence for the pretensions of that system which makes them known to us, or an objection against it. The truth is that most precarious internal evidence has been grounded on the presumption that we know a great deal more and can judge a great deal better of the unsearchable God and of His unsearchable processes than is at all consistent with the mediocrity of our powers; and on the other hand, in the very same presumption, have the enemies of the faith advanced objections, in every way as incompetent and irrelevant as is the evidence adduced by its defenders. There is much both of hostile and friendly argument, and more especially when the combatants adventure themselves on the subject-matter of revelation, that ought to be cancelled, whether on the Christian or Infidel side of the deistical controversy. It would relieve the whole question of a most unnecessary incumbrance.

16. We have experience of man, but we have no experience of God. We can reason upon the procedure of man in given circumstances, because this is an accessible subject, and comes under the cognizance of observation; but we cannot reason on the procedure of the Almighty in given circum-

final manifestation, it is our part to wait in humble expectancy, and to acquiesce in the mysteriousness of many things which at present we do not comprehend.

stances. This is an inaccessible subject, and comes not within the limits of direct and personal observation. The one, like the scale and compass, and measurements of Sir Isaac Newton, will lead us on safe and firm footing, to the true economy of the heavens; the other, like the ether, and whirlpools, and unfounded imaginations of Des Cartes, will not only lead us to misconceive that economy, but to maintain a stubborn opposition to the only competent evidence that can be offered upon the subject.

17. We feel, that in thus disclaiming support from much of what is commonly understood by the internal evidence, we do not follow the general example of those who have written on the deistical controversy. Take up Leland's performance, and it will be found, that one half of his discussion is expended upon the reasonableness of the doctrines, and in asserting the validity of the argument which is founded upon that reasonableness. It would save a vast deal of controversy, if it could be proved that much of this is superfluous and uncalled for; that, upon the authority of the proofs already insisted on, the New Testament must be received as a revelation from heaven; and that, instead of sitting in judgment over it, nothing remains on our part but an act of unreserved submission to all the doctrine and information which it offers to us. It is conceived, that in this way the general argument might be made to assume a more powerful and impressive aspect; and the defence of Christianity be more accommodated to the spirit and philosophy of the times.

18. Since the spirit of Lord Bacon's philosophy began to be rightly understood, the science of external nature has advanced with a rapidity unexampled in the history of all former ages. The great axiom of his philosophy is so simple in its nature, and so undeniable in its evidence, that it is astonishing how philosophers were so late in acknowledging it, or in being directed by its authority. It is more than two thousand years since the phenomena of external nature were objects of liberal curiosity to speculative and intelligent men. Yet two centuries have scarcely elapsed since the true path of investigation has been rightly pursued, and steadily persevered in; since the evidence of experience has been received as paramount to every other evidence, or in other words, since philosophers have agreed, that the only way to learn the magnitude of an object, is to measure it; the only way to learn its tangible properties, is to touch it; and the only way to learn its visible properties, is to look at it.

19. Nothing can be more safe or more infallible than the procedure of the inductive philosophy as applied to the phenomena of external nature. It is the eye, or the ear-witness of every thing which it records. It is at liberty to classify appearances; but then, in the work of classifying, it must be directed only by observation. It may groupe phenomena according to their resemblances. It may express these resemblances in words, and announce them to the world in the form of general laws. Yet such is the hardihood of the inductive philosophy, that though a single well-attested fact should

overturn a whole system, that fact must be admitted. A single experiment is often made to cut short the finest process of generalization, however painful and humiliating the sacrifice; and though a theory, the most simple and magnificent that ever charmed the eye of an enthusiast, was on the eve of emerging from it.

20. In submitting, then, to the rules of the inductive philosophy, we do not deny that certain sacrifices must be made, and some of the most urgent propensities of the mind put under severe restraint and regulation. The human mind feels restless and dissatisfied under the anxieties of ignorance. It longs for the repose of conviction; and, to gain this repose, it will often rather precipitate its conclusions, than wait for the tardy lights of observation and experiment. There is such a thing, too, as the love of simplicity and system—a prejudice of the understanding, which disposes it to include all the phenomena of nature under a few sweeping generalities—an indolence, which loves to repose on the beauties of a theory, rather than encounter the fatiguing detail of its evidences—a painful reluctance to the admission of facts, which, however true, break in upon the majestic simplicity that we would fain ascribe to the laws and operations of the universe.

21. Now, it is the glory of Lord Bacon's philosophy, to have achieved a victory over all these delusions; to have disciplined the minds of its votaries into an entire submission to evidence; to have trained them up in a kind of steady coldness to all the splendour and magnificence of theory;

and taught them to follow, with an unfaltering step, wherever the sure, though humbler path of experiment may lead them.

22. To justify the cautious procedure of the inductive philosophy, nothing more is necessary than to take a view of the actual powers and circumstances of humanity; of the entire ignorance of man when he comes into the world, and of the steps by which that ignorance is enlightened; of the numerous errors into which he is misled, the moment he ceases to observe, and begins to presume or to excogitate; of the actual history of science; its miserable progress, so long as categories and principles retained their ascendancy in the schools; and the splendour and rapidity of its triumphs, so soon as man understood that he was nothing more than the disciple of Nature, and must take his lesson as Nature offers it to him.

23. What is true of the science of external nature, holds equally true of the science and phenomena of mind. On this subject, too, the presumptuous ambition of man carried him far from the sober path of experimental inquiry. He conceived that his business was not to observe, but to speculate; to construct systems rather than consult his own experience, and the experience of others; to collect the materials of his theory, not from the history of observed facts, but from a set of assumed and excogitated principles. Now the same observations apply to this department of inquiry. We must admit to be true, not what we presume, but what we find to be so. We must restrain the enterprises of fancy. A law of the human mind must be only a

series of well-authenticated facts, reduced to one general description, or grouped together under some general points of resemblance. The business of the moral as well as of the natural philosopher is not to assert what he excogitates, but to record what he observes; not to amuse himself with the speculations of fancy, but to describe phenomena as he sees, or as he feels them. This is the business of the moral as well as of the natural inquirer. We must extend the application of Lord Bacon's principles to moral and metaphysical subjects. It was long before this application was recognised, or acted upon by philosophers. Many of the continental speculations are still infected with the presumptuous *a priori* spirit of the old schools; though the writings of Reid and Stewart have contributed much to chase away this spirit from the metaphysics of our own country, and to bring the science of mind, as well as matter, under the entire dominion of the inductive philosophy.

24. These general observations we conceive to be a most direct and applicable introduction to that part of the subject which is before us. In discussing the evidence of Christianity, all that we ask of our reader is to bring along with him the same sober and inductive spirit, that is now deemed so necessary in the prosecution of the other sciences; to abandon every system of theology, that is not supported by evidence, however much it may gratify his taste, or regale his imagination; and to admit any system of theology, that is supported by evidence, however repugnant to his feelings or his prejudices; to make conviction, in fact, paramount to inclination,

or to fancy; and to maintain, through the whole process of the investigation, that strength and intrepidity of character, which will follow wherever the light of argument may conduct him, though it should land him in conclusions the most nauseous and unpalatable.

25. We have no time to enter into causes; but the fact is undeniable. Many philosophers of the present day are disposed to nauseate every thing connected with theology. They associate something low and ignoble with the prosecution of it. They regard it as not a fit subject for liberal inquiry. They turn away from it with disgust, as one of the humblest departments of literary exertion. We do not say that they reject its evidences, but they evade the investigation of them. They feel no conviction; not because they have established the fallacy of a single argument, but because they entertain a general dislike to the subject, and will not attend to it. They love to expatiate in the more kindred fields of science or elegant literature; and while the most respectful caution, and humility, and steadiness, are seen to preside over every department of moral and physical investigation, theology is the only subject that is suffered to remain the victim of prejudice, and of a contempt the most unjust, and the most unphilosophical.

26. We do not speak of this feeling as an impiety; we speak of it as an offence against the principles of just speculation. We do not speak of it as it allures the heart from the influence of religion; we speak of it as it allures the understanding from the influence of evidence and truth. In a word,

we are not preaching against it; we reason against it. We contend, that it is a transgression against the rules of the inductive philosophy. All that we want is, the application of Lord Bacon's principles to the investigation before us; and as the influence of prejudice and disgust is banished from every other department of inquiry, we conceive it fair that it should be banished from theology also, and that our subject should have the common advantage of a hearing—where no partiality of the heart or fancy is admitted, and no other influence acknowledged than the influence of evidence over the conviction of the understanding.

27. Let us therefore endeavour to evince the success and felicity with which Lord Bacon's principles may be applied to the investigation before us.

28. According to Bacon, man is ignorant of every thing antecedent to observation; and there is not a single department of inquiry, in which he does not err the moment that he abandons it. It is true, that the greater part of every individual's knowledge is derived immediately from testimony; but still it is from testimony that brings home to his conviction the observation of others. Still it is observation which lies at the bottom of his knowledge. Still it is man taking his lesson from the actual condition of the thing which he contemplates; a condition that is altogether independent of his will, and which no speculation of his can modify or destroy. There is an obstinacy in the processes of nature, which he cannot control. He must follow it. The construction of a system should

not be a creative, but an imitative process, which admits nothing but what evidence assures us to be true, and is founded only on the lessons of experience. It is not by the exercise of a sublime and speculative ingenuity that man arrives at truth. It is by letting himself down to the drudgery of observation. It is by descending to the sober work of seeing, and feeling, and experimenting. Wherever, in short, he has not had the benefit of his own observation, or the observation of others brought home to his conviction by credible testimony, there he is ignorant.

29. This is found to hold true, even in those sciences where the objects of inquiry are the most familiar and the most accessible. Before the right method of philosophizing was acted upon, how grossly did philosophers misinterpret the phenomena of external nature, when a steady perseverance in the path of observation could have led them to infallible certainty! How misled in their conception of every thing around them; when, instead of making use of their senses, they delivered themselves up to the exercises of a solitary abstraction, and thought to explain every thing by the fantastic play of unmeaning terms, and imaginary principles! And when, at last, set on the right path of discovery, how totally different were the results of actual observation, from those systems which antiquity had rendered venerable, and the authority of great names had recommended to the acquiescence of many centuries! This proves that, even in the most familiar subjects, man knows every thing by observation, and is ignorant of every thing without

it; and that he cannot advance a single footstep in the acquirement of truth, till he bid adieu to the delusions of theory, and sternly refuse indulgence to its fondest anticipations.

30. Thus, there is both a humility and a hardihood in the philosophical temper. They are the same in principle, though different in display. The first is founded on a sense of ignorance, and disposes the mind of the philosopher to pay the most respectful attention to every thing that is offered in the shape of evidence. The second consists in a determined purpose to reject and to sacrifice every thing that offers to oppose the influence of evidence, or to set itself up against its legitimate and well-established conclusions. In the ethereal whirlpools of Des Cartes, we see a transgression against the humility of the philosophical character. It is the presumption of knowledge on a subject, where the total want of observation should have confined him to the modesty of ignorance. In the Newtonian system of the world, we see both humility and hardihood. Sir Isaac commences his investigation with all the modesty of a respectful inquirer. His is the docility of a scholar, who is sensible that he has all to learn. He takes his lesson as experience offers it to him, and yields a passive obedience to the authority of this great schoolmaster. It is in his obstinate adherence to the truth which his master has given him, that the hardihood of the philosophical character begins to appear. We see him announce, with entire confidence, both the fact and its legitimate consequences. We see him not deterred by the singularity of his conclusions, and

quite unmindful of that host of antipathies which the reigning taste and philosophy of the times mustered up to oppose him. We see him resisting the influence of every authority, but the authority of experience. We see, that the beauty of the old system had no power to charm him from that process of investigation by which he destroyed it. We see him sitting upon its merits with the severity of a judge, unmoved by all those graces of simplicity and magnificence which the sublime genius of its inventor had thrown around it.

31. We look upon these two constituents of the philosophical temper, as forming the best preparation for finally terminating in the decided Christian. In appreciating the pretensions of Christianity, there is a call, both upon the humility and the hardihood of every inquirer; the humility which feels its own ignorance, and submits without reserve to whatever comes before it in the shape of authentic and well-established evidence; and the hardihood, which sacrifices every taste and every prejudice at the shrine of conviction, which defies the scorn of a pretended philosophy, which is not ashamed of a profession that some conceive to be degraded by the homage of the superstitious vulgar, which can bring down its mind to the homeliness of the Gospel, and renounce, without a sigh, all that is elegant, and splendid, and fascinating, in the speculations of moralists. In attending to the complexion of the christian argument, we are widely mistaken, if it is not precisely that kind of argument which will be most readily admitted by those whose minds have been trained to

the soundest habits of philosophical investigation; and if that spirit of cautious and sober-minded inquiry, to which modern science stands indebted for all her triumphs, is not the very identical spirit which leads us to "cast down all our lofty imaginations, and to bring every thought into the captivity of the obedience of Christ."

32. On entering into any department of inquiry, the best preparation is that docility of mind which is founded on a sense of our total ignorance of the subject; and nothing is looked upon as more unphilosophical than the temerity of that *a priori* spirit, which disposes many to presume before they investigate. But if we admit the total ignorance of man antecedent to observation, even in those sciences where the objects of inquiry are the nearest and the most familiar, we will be more ready to admit his total ignorance of those subjects which are more remote and more inaccessible. If caution and modesty be esteemed so philosophical, even when employed in that little field of investigation which comes within the range of our senses; why should they not be esteemed philosophical when employed on a subject so vast, so awful, so remote from direct and personal observation, as the government of God? There can be nothing so completely above us, and beyond us, as the plans of the infinite Mind, which extend to all time, and embrace all worlds. There is no subject to which the cautious and humble spirit of Lord Bacon's philosophy is more applicable; nor can we conceive a more glaring rebellion against the authority of his maxims, than for the beings of a

day to sit in judgment upon the Eternal, and apply their paltry experience to the counsels of his high and unfathomable wisdom. We do not speak of it as impious; we speak of it as unphilosophical. We are not bringing the decrees of the orthodox to bear against it; we are bringing the principles of our modern and enlightened schools. We are applying the very same principles to a system of theism, that we would do to a system of geology. Both may regale the fancy with the grandeur of their contemplations; both may receive embellishment from the genius and imagination of their inventors; both may carry us along with the powers of a captivating eloquence: but all this is not enough to satisfy the severe and scrupulous spirit of the modern philosophy. Give us facts. Give us appearances. Show us how, from the experience of a life or a century, you can draw a legitimate conclusion so boundless in its extent, and by which you propose to fix down, both the processes of a remote antiquity, and the endless progression either of nature or of Providence in future ages? Are there any historical documents? Any memorials of the experience of past times? On a question of such magnitude, we would esteem the recorded observations of some remote age to be peculiarly valuable, and worth all the ingenuity and eloquence which a philosopher could bestow on the limited experience of one or two generations. A process of geology may take millions of years before it reaches its accomplishment. It is impossible that we can collect the law or the character of this process from the experience of a single

century, which does not furnish us one single step in this vast and immeasurable progression. We look as far as we can into a distant antiquity, and take hold with avidity of any authentic document, by which we can ascertain a single fact to guide and to enlighten us in this interesting speculation. The same caution is necessary in the subject before us. The administration of the Supreme Being is coeval with the first purposes of his uncreated mind, and it points to eternity. The life of man is but a point in that progress, to which we see no end, and can assign no beginning. We are not able to collect the law or the character of this administration from an experience so momentary. We therefore cast an eye on the history of past times. We examine every document which comes before us. We compare all the moral phenomena which can be collected from the narratives of antiquity. We seize with avidity every record of the manifestations of Providence; every fact which can enlighten the ways of God to man; and we would esteem it a deviation from the right spirit and temper of philosophical investigation, were we to suffer the crude or fanciful speculations of our own limited experience to take a precedency over the authentic informations of history.

33. But this is not all. Our experience is not only limited in point of time; it is also limited in point of extent. To assign the character of the divine administration from the little that offers itself to the notice of our own personal experience, would be far more absurd than to infer the history and character of the kingdom from the history and

character of our own family. Vain is the attempt to convey in language what the most powerful imagination sinks under. How small the globe, and "all which it inherits," is, in the immensity of creation! How humble a corner in the immeasurable fields of nature and of providence! If the whole visible creation were to be swept away, we think of the dark and awful solitude which it would leave behind it in the unpeopled regions of space. But, to a mind that could take in the whole, and throw a wide survey over the innumerable worlds which roll beyond the ken of the human eye, there would be no blank; and the universe of God would appear a scene as goodly and majestic as ever. Now it is the administration of this God that we sit in judgment upon; the counsels of Him, whose wisdom and energy are of a kind so inexplicable; whom no magnitude can overpower, whom no littleness can escape, whom no variety can bewilder; who gives vegetation to every blade of grass, and moves every particle of blood which circulates through the veins of the minutest animal; and all this by the same omnipotent arm that is abroad upon the universe, and presides in high authority over the destiny of all worlds.

34. It is impossible not to mingle the moral impressions of piety with such a contemplation. But suppose these impressions to be excluded, that the whole may be reduced to a matter of abstract and unfeeling intelligence. The question under consideration is, How far the experience of man can lead him to any certain conclusions, as to the

processes of the divine administration? If it does lead him to some certain conclusions, then, in the spirit of the Baconian philosophy, he will apply these conclusions to the information derived from other sources; and they will of course affect, or destroy, or confirm, the credibility of that information. If, on the other hand, it appears that experience gives no light, no direction on the subject; then, in the very same spirit, he will submit his mind as a blank surface to all the positive information which comes to it from any other quarter. We take our lesson as it comes to us, provided we are satisfied before hand, that it comes from a source which is authentic. We set up no presumptions of our own against the authority of the unquestionable evidence that we have met with, and reject all the suggestions which our defective experience can furnish, as the follies of a rash and fanciful speculation.

35. Now, let it be observed, that the great strength of the christian argument as far as we have yet expounded it, lies in the historical evidence for the truth of the gospel narrative. In discussing the light of this evidence, we walk by the light of experience. We assign the degree of weight that is due to the testimony of the first Christians upon the observed principles of human nature. We do not step beyond the cautious procedure of Lord Bacon's philosophy. We keep within the safe and certain limits of experimental truth. We believe the testimony of the Apostles; because, from what we know of the human character, it is impossible that men in their circumstances could have perse-

vered as they did in the assertion of a falsehood; it is impossible that they could have imposed this falsehood upon such a multitude of followers; it is impossible that they could have escaped detection, surrounded as they were by a host of enemies, so eager and so determined in their resentments. On this kind of argument we are quite at home. There is no theory, no assumption. We feel every inch of the ground we are treading upon. The degree of credit that should be annexed to the testimony of the Apostles, is altogether a question of experience. Every principle which we apply towards the decision of this question, is founded upon materials which lie before us, and are every day within the reach of observation. Our belief in the testimony of the Apostles, is founded upon our experience of human nature and human affairs. In the whole process of the inquiry, we never wander from that sure, though humble path, which has been pointed out to us by the great master of philosophizing. We never cast off the authority of those maxims, which have been found in every other department of knowledge to be sound and infallible. We never suffer assumption to take the precedency of observation, or abandon that safe and certain mode of investigation, which is the only one suited to the real mediocrity of our powers.

36. It appears to us, that the disciples of the infidel philosophy have reversed this process. They take a loftier flight. We seldom find them upon the ground of the historical evidence. It is not, in general, upon the weight, or the nature of human testimony, that they venture to pronounce on the

credibility of the christian revelation. It is on the subject-matter of that revelation itself. It is on what they conceive to be the absurdity of its doctrines. It is because they see something in the nature or dispensation of Christianity, which they think not agreeable to that line of proceeding which the Almighty should observe in the government of his creatures. Rousseau expresses his astonishment at the strength of the historical testimony; so strong, that the inventor of the narrative appeared to him to be more miraculous than the hero. But the absurdities of this said revelation are sufficient, in his mind, to bear down the whole weight of its direct and external evidences. There was something in the doctrines of the New Testament repulsive to the taste, and the imagination, and perhaps even to the convictions of this interesting enthusiast. He could not reconcile them with his pre-established conceptions of the divine character and mode of operation. To submit to these doctrines, he behoved to surrender that theism, which the powers of his ardent mind had wrought up into a most beautiful and delicious speculation. Such a sacrifice was not to be made. It was too painful. It would have taken away from him, what every mind of genius and sensibility esteems to be the highest of all luxuries. It would destroy a system, which had all that is fair and magnificent to recommend it, and mar the gracefulness of that fine intellectual picture, on which this wonderful man had bestowed all the embellishments of feeling, and fancy, and eloquence.

37. In as far, then, as we can judge of the conduct

of man in given circumstances, we would pass a favourable sentence upon the testimony of the Apostles. But, says the Deist, I judge of the conduct of God; and what the Apostles tell me of him is so opposite to that judgment, that I discredit their testimony. The question at issue between us is, Shall we admit the testimony of the Apostles, upon the application of principles founded on observation, and as certain as is our experience of human affairs? Or, shall we reject that testimony upon the application of principles that are altogether beyond the range of observation, and as doubtful and imperfect in their nature, as is our experience of the counsels of Heaven? In the first argument there is no assumption. We are competent to judge of the behaviour of man in given circumstances. This is a subject completely accessible to observation. The second argument is founded upon assumption entirely. We are not competent to judge of the conduct of the Almighty in given circumstances. Here we are precluded, by the nature of the subject, from the benefit of observation. There is no antecedent experience to guide or to enlighten us. It is not for man to assume what is right, or proper, or natural for the Almighty to do. It is not in the mere spirit of piety that we say so; it is in the spirit of the soundest experimental philosophy. The argument of the Christian is precisely what the maxims of Lord Bacon would dispose us to acquiesce in. The argument of the infidel is precisely that argument which the same maxims would dispose us to reject; and, when put by the side of the christian argument, it appears

as crude and as unphilosophical, as do the ingenious speculations of the schoolmen, when set in opposition to the rigour, and evidence, and precision, which reign in every department of modern science.

38. The application of Lord Bacon's philosophy to the study of external nature, was a happy epoch in the history of physical science. It is not long since this application has been extended to the study of moral and intellectual phenomena. All that we contend for is, that our subject should have the benefit of the same application; and we count it hard, while, in every other department of inquiry, a respect for truth is found sufficient to repress the appetite for system-building, that theology, the loftiest and most inaccessible of all the sciences, should still remain infected with a spirit so exploded, and so unphilosophical; and that the fancy, and theory, and unsupported speculation, so current among the Deists and demi-infidels of the day, should be held paramount to the authority of facts, which have come down to us with a weight of evidence and testimony, that is quite unexampled in the history of ancient times.

39. What is science, but a record of observed phenomena, grouped together according to certain points of resemblance, which have been suggested by an actual attention to the phenomena themselves? We never think of questioning the existence of the phenomena, after we have demonstrated the genuineness and authenticity of the record. After this is demonstrated, the singular or unexpected nature of the phenomena is not suffered

to weaken their credibility; a credibility which can only be destroyed by the authority of our own personal observation, or some other record possessed of equal or superior pretensions. But in none of the inductive sciences is it in the power of a student to verify every thing by his own personal observation. He must put up with the observations of others, brought home to the convictions of his own mind by creditable testimony. In the science of geology, this is eminently the case. In a science of such extent, our principles must be in part founded upon the observations of others, transmitted to us from a distant country. And in a science, the processes of which are so lengthened in point of time, our principles should also in part be founded on the observations of others, transmitted to us from a remote antiquity. Any observations of our own are so limited, both in point of space and of time, that we never think of opposing their authority to the evidence which is laid before us. Our whole attention is directed to the validity of the record; and the moment that this validity is established, we hold it incumbent upon us to submit our minds to the entire and unmodified impression of the testimony contained in it. Now, all that we ask is, that the same process of investigation be observed in theology, which is held to be so sound and so legitimate in other sciences. In a science of such extent, as to embrace the wide domain of moral and intelligent nature, we feel the littleness of that range to which our own personal observations are confined. We should be glad, not merely of the information

transmitted to us from a distant country, but of the authentic information transmitted to us by any other order of beings, in some distant and unknown part of the creation. In a science, too, which has for its object the lengthened processes of the divine administration, we should like if any record of past times could enable us to extend our observations beyond the limits of our own ephemeral experience; and if there are any events of a former age possessed of such a peculiar and decisive character, as would help us to some satisfactory conclusion in this greatest and most interesting of the sciences.

40. On a subject so much above us and beyond us, we should never think of opposing any preconceptions to the evidence of history. We should maintain the humility of the inductive spirit. We should cast about for facts, and events, and appearances. We should offer our minds as a blank surface to every thing that came to them, supported by unexceptionable evidence. It is not upon the nature of the facts themselves, that we should pronounce upon their credibility, but upon the nature of that testimony by which they were supported. Our whole attention should be directed to the authority of the record. After this was established, we should surrender our whole understanding to its contents. We should school down every antipathy within us, and disown it as a childish affection, unworthy of a philosopher, who professes to follow truth through all the disgusts and discouragements which surround it. There are men of splendid reputation in our enlightened circles, who never attended to this speculation,

and who annex to the Gospel of Christ nothing else than ideas of superstition and vulgarity. In braving their contempt, we should feel ourselves in the best element for the display and exercise of the philosophical temper. We should rejoice in the omnipotence of truth; and anticipate, in triumph, the victory which it must accomplish over the pride of science, and the fastidiousness of literature. It should not be the enthusiasm of a visionary which would support us, but the inward working of the very same principle which sustained Galileo, when he adhered to the result of his experiments, and Newton, when he opposed his measurements and observations to the tide of prejudice he had to encounter from the prevailing taste and philosophy of the times.

41. We conceive, that inattention to the above principles has led many of the most popular and respected writers in the deistical controversy, to introduce a great deal of discussion that is foreign to the merits of the question altogether; and in this way the attention is often turned away from the point in which the main strength of the argument lies. An infidel, for example, objects against some process or other in the economy of the Gospel. To repel the objection, the Christian conceives it necessary to vindicate the process, and to show how consistent it is with all our antecedent conceptions of God and of his ways. All this we count superfluous. It is imposing an unnecessary task upon ourselves. Enough for us to have established the authority of the christian revelation upon the ground of its historical evidence. All

that remains is to submit our minds to the fair interpretation of Scripture. Yes; but how do you dispose of the objection drawn from the independent and *a priori* imagination of our adversary? In precisely the same way that we would dispose of an objection drawn from some speculative system, against the truth of any physical fact that has been well established by observation or testimony. We would disown the system, and oppose the obstinacy of the fact to all the elegance and ingenuity of the speculation.

42. We are sensible that this is not enough to satisfy a numerous class of very sincere and well-disposed Christians. There are many of this description, who, antecedent to the study of the christian revelation altogether, repose a very strong confidence in the light of nature, and think that, upon the mere strength of it, they can often pronounce with a considerable degree of assurance on the plans of the divine administration. To such as these, something more is necessary than the external evidences on which Christianity rests. You must reconcile the doctrines of Christianity with those previous conceptions which the light of nature has given them; and a great deal of elaborate argument is often expended in bringing about this accommodation. It is, of course, a work of greater difficulty, to convince this description of people, though, in point of fact, this difficulty has been overcome, in a way the most masterly and decisive, by one of the soundest and most philosophical of our theologians.

43. To another description of Christians, this

attempt to reconcile the doctrines of Christianity with the light of nature is superfluous. Give them evidence for Christianity, and unless its doctrines stand clearly opposed to moral, or logical, or mathematical, or historical truth, all preconceptions of their own will fly like so many visionary phantoms before the light of its overbearing authority. With them the argument is reduced to a narrower compass. Is the testimony of the Apostles and first Christians sufficient to establish the credibility of the facts which are recorded in the New Testament? The question is made to rest exclusively on the character of this testimony, and the circumstances attending it; and no antecedent theory of their own is suffered to mingle with the investigation. If the historical evidence of Christianity is found to be conclusive, they conceive the investigation to be at an end; and that nothing remains, on their part, but an act of unconditional submission to all its doctrines.

44. Though it might be proper, in the present state of opinion, to accommodate to both these cases, yet we profess ourselves to belong to the latter description of Christians. We hold by the insufficiency of Nature to pronounce upon the intrinsic merits of any revelation, and think that the authority of every revelation rests mainly upon its historical and experimental evidences, and upon such marks of honesty in the composition itself as would apply to any human performance. We rest this opinion, not upon any fanatical impression of the ignorance of man, or how sinful it is for a weak and guilty mortal to pronounce upon the

counsels of heaven, and the laws of the divine administration. We disown this presumption, not merely because it is sinful, but because we conceive it to be unphilosophical; and precisely analogous to that theorizing *a priori* spirit, which the wisdom of Bacon has banished from all the schools of philosophy.

45. For the satisfaction of the first class, we refer them to that argument which has been prosecuted with so much ability and success by Bishop Butler, in his *Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion*. It is not so much the object of this author to found any positive argument on the accordancy which subsists between the processes of the divine administration in nature, and the processes ascribed to God by revelation, as to repel the argument founded upon their supposed discordancy. To one of the second class, the argument of Bishop Butler is less called for; but as to one of the first class, we can conceive nothing more calculated to quiet his difficulties. He believes a God; and he must therefore believe the character and existence of God to be reconcileable with all that he observes in the events and phenomena around him. He questions the claims of the New Testament to be a revelation from heaven; because he conceives, that it ascribes a plan and an economy to the Supreme Being which are unworthy of his character. We offer no positive solution of this difficulty. We profess ourselves to be too little acquainted with the dispensations of God; and that, in this little corner of his works, we see not far enough to offer any decision on the

merits of a government, which embraces worlds, and reaches eternity. We think we do enough, if we give a sufficiency of experimental proof for the New Testament being a true and authentic message from heaven; and that therefore nothing remains for us, but to attend and to submit to it. But the argument of Bishop Butler enables us to do still more than this. It enables us to say, that the very thing objected against in Christianity exists in nature; and that therefore the same God who is the author of nature, may be the author of Christianity. We do not say that any positive evidence can be founded upon this analogy. But, in as far as it goes to repel the objection, it is triumphant. A man has no right to retain his theism, if he reject Christianity upon difficulties to which natural religion is equally liable. If Christianity tell us, that the guilt of a father has brought suffering and vice upon his posterity; it is what we see exemplified in a thousand instances amongst the families around us. If it tell us, that the innocent have suffered for the guilty; it is nothing more than what all history and all observation have made perfectly familiar to us. If it tell us of one portion of the human race being distinguished, by the sovereign will of the Almighty, for superior knowledge, or superior privileges; it only adds one inequality more to the many inequalities which we perceive every day in the gifts of nature, of fortune, and of providence. In short, without entering into all the details of that argument, which Butler has brought forward in a way so masterly and decisive, there is not a single

impeachment which can be offered against the God of Christianity, that may not, if consistently proceeded upon, be offered against the God of Nature itself. If the one be unworthy of God, the other is equally so; and if, in spite of these difficulties, we still retain the conviction, that there is a God of Nature, it is not fair or rational to suffer them to outweigh all that positive evidence and testimony, which have been adduced for proving, that the same God is the God of Christianity also.

46. If Christianity be still resisted, it appears to us that the only consistent refuge is Atheism. The very same peculiarities in the dispensation of the Gospel, which lead the infidel to reject it as unworthy of God, go to prove, that nature is unworthy of him; and land us in the melancholy conclusion, that whatever theory can be offered as to the mysterious origin and existence of the things which be, they are not under the dominion of a supreme and intelligent mind. Nor do we look upon Atheism as an altogether hopeless species of infidelity, unless in so far as it proves a stubborn disposition of the heart to resist every religious conviction. Viewed purely as an intellectual subject, we look upon the mind of an Atheist as not an entirely unfit recipient for the proofs of Christianity. It is a blank surface, on which evidence may make a fair impression, and where the finger of history may inscribe its credible and well-attested information; the mind of a presumptuous and prejudiced Deist, on the other hand, is occupied with preconceptions. It will not take what history offers to it. It puts itself

into the same unphilosophical posture, in which the mind of a prejudiced Cartesian opposed its theory of the heavens to the demonstration and measurements of Newton. The theory of the Deist upon a subject, where truth is still more inaccessible, and speculation still more presumptuous, sets him to resist the most safe and competent evidence that can be appealed to. What was originally the evidence of observation, and is now transformed into the evidence of testimony, comes down to us in a series of historical documents, the closest and most consistent that all antiquity can furnish. It is the unfortunate theory which forms the grand obstacle to the admission of the christian miracles, and which leads the Deist to an exhibition of himself so unphilosophical, as that of trampling on the soundest laws of evidence, by bringing an historical fact under the tribunal of a theoretical principle. The deistical speculation of Rousseau, by which he neutralized the testimony of the first Christians, is as complete a transgression against the temper and principles of true science, as a category of Aristotle when employed to overrule an experiment in chemistry. But however this be, it is evident, that Rousseau would have given a readier reception to the gospel history, had his mind not been preoccupied with the speculation; and the negative state of Atheism would in him have been more favourable to the admission of those facts, which are connected with the origin and establishment of our religion in the world.

47. This suggests the way in which the evidence for Christianity might be carried home to the mind

of an Atheist. He sees nothing in the phenomena around him, that can warrant him to believe in the existence of a living and intelligent principle, which gave birth and movement to all things. He does not say, that he would refuse credit to the existence of God upon sufficient evidence; but he says that there are not such appearances of design in nature, as to supply him with that evidence. He does not deny the existence of God to be a possible truth; but he affirms, that while there is nothing before him but the consciousness of what passes within, and the observation of what passes without, it remains an assertion destitute of proof, and can have no more effect upon his conviction than any other nonentity of the imagination. There is a mighty difference between *not proven* and *disproven*. We see nothing in the argument of the Atheists which goes farther, than to establish the former sentence upon the question of God's existence. It is altogether an argument *ab ignorantia;* and the same ignorance which restrains them from asserting in positive terms that God exists, equally restrains them from asserting in positive terms that God does not exist. The assertion may be offered, that, in some distant regions of the creation, there are tracts of space which, instead of being occupied like the tracts around us with suns and planetary systems, teem only with animated beings, who, without being supported like us on the firm surface of a world, have the power of spontaneous movement in free spaces. We cannot say that the assertion is not true, but we can say that it is not proven. It carries in it no positive character either

of truth or falsehood, and may therefore be admitted on appropriate and satisfying evidence. But till that evidence comes, the mind is in a state entirely neutral; and such we conceive to be the neutral state of the Atheist, as to what he holds to be the unproved assertion of the existence of God.

48. To the neutral mind of the Atheist, then, unfurnished as it is with any previous conception, we offer the historical evidence of Christianity. We do not ask him to presume the existence of God. We ask him to examine the miracles of the New Testament merely as recorded events, and to admit no other principle into the investigation, than those which are held to be satisfying and decisive, on any other subject of written testimony. The sweeping principle upon which Rousseau, filled with his own assumptions, condemned the historical evidence for the truth of the gospel narrative, can have no influence on the blank and unoccupied mind of an Atheist. He has no presumptions upon the subject; for to his eye the phenomena of nature sit so loose and unconnected with that intelligent Being, to whom they have been referred as their origin, that he does not feel himself entitled, from these phenomena, to ascribe any existence, any character, any attributes, or any method of administration to such a Being. He is therefore in a condition of perfect freedom for submitting his understanding to the entire impression of the historical evidence. Those difficulties which perplex the Deists, who cannot recognise in the God of the New Testament the same features and the same

principles in which they have invested the God of Nature, are no difficulties to him. He has no God of Nature to confront with that real, though invisible power, which lay at the bottom of those astonishing miracles, on which history has stamped her most authentic characters. Though the power which presided there should be an arbitrary, an unjust, or a malignant being, all this may startle a Deist, but it will not prevent a consistent Atheist from acquiescing in any legitimate inference, to which the miracles of the Gospel, viewed in the simple light of historical facts, may chance to carry him. He cannot bring his antecedent information into play upon this question. He professes to have no antecedent information on the subject; and this sense of his entire ignorance, which lies at the bottom of his Atheism, would expunge from his mind all that is theoretical, and make it the passive recipient of every thing which observation offers to its notice, or which credible testimony has brought down to it of the history of past ages.

49. What then, we ask, does the Atheist make of the miracles of the New Testament? If he question their truth, he must do it upon grounds that are purely historical. He is precluded from every other ground by the very principle on which he has rested his Atheism; and we, therefore, upon the strength of that testimony which has been already exhibited, press the admission of these miracles as facts. If there be nothing in the ordinary phenomena of nature, to infer a God, do these extraordinary phenomena supply him with no argument? Does a voice from heaven make

no impression upon him? And we have the best evidence which history can furnish, that such a voice was uttered—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We have the evidence of a fact, for the existence of that very Being from whom the voice proceeded; and the evidence of a thousand facts, for a power superior to nature: because, on the impulse of a volition, it counteracted her laws and processes; it allayed the wind; it gave sight to the blind; health to the diseased; and, at the utterance of a voice, it gave life to the dead. The ostensible agent in all these wonderful proceedings gave not only credentials of his power, but he gave such credentials of his honesty, as dispose our understanding to receive his explanation of them. We do not at present avail ourselves of any other principle than what an Atheist will acknowledge. He understands, as well as we do, the natural signs of veracity, which lie in the tone, the manner, the countenance, the high moral expression of worth and benevolence, and, above all, in that firm and undaunted constancy, which neither contempt, nor poverty, nor death, could shift from any of its positions. All these claims upon our belief were accumulated, to an unexampled degree, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth; and when we couple with them his undoubted miracles, and the manner in which his own personal appearance was followed up by a host of witnesses, who, after a catastrophe which would have proved a death-blow to any cause of imposture, offered themselves to the eye of the public, with the same powers, the same evidence, and the same testimony

it seems impossible to resist his account of the invisible principle, which gave birth and movement to the whole of this wonderful transaction. Whatever Atheism we may have founded on the common phenomena around us, here is a new phenomenon which demands our attention—the testimony of a man who, in addition to evidences of honesty, more varied and more satisfying than were ever offered by a brother of the species, had a voice from the clouds, and the power of working miracles, to vouch for him. We do not think, that the account which this man gives of himself can be viewed either with indifference or distrust, and the account is most satisfying. "I proceeded forth and came from God."—"He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God."—"Even as the Father said unto me so I speak." He had elsewhere said, that God was his Father. The existence of God is here laid before us, by an evidence altogether distinct from the natural argument of the schools; and it may therefore be admitted in spite of any felt deficiency in that argument. From the same pure and unquestionable source we gather our information of his attributes. "God is true."—"God is a spirit." He is omnipotent, "for with God all things are possible." He is intelligent, "for he knoweth what things we have need of." He sees all things, and he directs all things; "for the very hairs of our head are numbered," and "a sparrow falleth not to the ground without his permission."

50. The evidences of the christian religion are suited to every species of infidelity. Even let the Atheist unfurnished with any previous conception,

come as he is; and, upon the strength of his own favourite principle, viewing it as a pure intellectual question, and abstracting from the more unmanageable tendencies of the heart and temper, he ought to take in Christianity, and that too in a far purer and more scriptural form, than can be expected from those whose minds are tainted and preoccupied with their former speculations.

CHAPTER VII.

Remarks on the Argument from Prophecy.

1. PROPHECY is another species of evidence to which Christianity professes an abundant claim. The prediction of what is future may not be delivered in terms so clear and intelligible as the history of what is past; and yet, in its actual fulfilment, it may leave no doubt on the mind of the inquirer, that it was a prediction, and that the event in question was in the contemplation of him who uttered it. It may be easy to dispose of one isolated prophecy, by ascribing it to accident; but when we observe a number of these prophecies, delivered in different ages, and all bearing an application to the same events, or the same individual, it is difficult to resist the impression that they were actuated by a knowledge superior to human. They form part, therefore, of the miraculous evidence for Christianity—a miracle of

knowledge being an indication of the supernatural, no less decisive than a miracle of power.

2. The obscurity of the prophetical language has been often complained of; but it is not so often attended to, that if the prophecy which foretells an event were as clear as the narrative which describes it, it would in many cases annihilate the argument. Were the history of any individual foretold in terms as explicit as it is in the power of narrative to make them, it might be competent for any usurper to set himself forward, and, in as far as it depended upon his own agency, he might realize that history. He has no more to do than to take his lesson from the prophecy before him; but could it be said that fulfilment like this carried in it the evidence of any thing divine or miraculous? If the prophecy of a Prince and a Saviour, in the Old Testament, were different from what they are, and delivered in the precise and intelligible terms of an actual history, then every accomplishment which could be brought about by the agency of those who understood the prophecy, and were anxious for its verification, is lost to the argument. It would be instantly said, that the agents in the transaction took their clue from the prophecy before them. It is the way, in fact, in which infidels have attempted to evade the argument as it actually stands. In the New Testament, an event is sometimes said to happen, that *it might be fulfilled* which was spoken by some of the old prophets. If every event, which enters into the Gospel, had been under the control of agents merely human, and friends to Christianity, then we might have had reason to pronounce the

whole history to be one continued process of artful and designed accommodation to the Old Testament prophecies. But the truth is, that many of the events pointed at in the Old Testament, so far from being brought about by the agency of Christians, were brought about in opposition to their most anxious wishes. Some of them were brought about by the agency of their most decided enemies; and some of them, such as the dissolution of the Jewish state, and the dispersion of its people amongst all countries, were quite beyond the control of the Apostles and their followers, and were effected by the intervention of a neutral party, which at the time took no interest in the question, and which was a stranger to the prophecy, though the unconscious instrument of its fulfilment.

3. Lord Bolingbroke has carried the objection so far, that he asserts Jesus Christ to have brought on his own death, by a series of wilful and preconcerted measures, merely to give the Disciples who came after him the triumph of an appeal to the old prophecies. This is ridiculous enough; but it serves to show with what facility an infidel might have evaded the whole argument, had these prophecies been free of all that obscurity which is now so loudly complained of.

4. The best form for the purposes of argument, in which a prophecy can be delivered, is to be so obscure, as to leave the event, or rather its main circumstances, unintelligible before the fulfilment, and so clear as to be intelligible after it. It is easy to conceive that this may be an attainable object: and it is saying much for the argument as it stands,

that the happiest illustrations of this clearness on the one hand, and this obscurity on the other, are to be gathered from the actual prophecies of the Old Testament.

5. It is not, however, by this part of the argument, that we expect to reclaim the enemy of our religion from his infidelity; not that the examination would not satisfy him, but that the examination will not be given. What a violence it would be offering to all his antipathies, were we to land him, at the outset of our discussions, among the chapters of Daniel or Isaiah! He has too inveterate a contempt for the Bible. He nauseates the whole subject too strongly to be prevailed upon to accompany us to such an exercise. On such a subject as this, there is no contact, no approximation betwixt us; and we therefore leave him with the assertion, (an assertion which he has no title to pronounce upon, till after he has finished the very examination in which we are most anxious to engage him,) that in the numerous prophecies of the Old Testament, there is such a multitude of allusions to the events of the New, as will give a strong impression to the mind of every inquirer, that the whole forms one magnificent series of communications betwixt the visible and the invisible world; a great plan over which the unseen God presides in wisdom, and which, beginning with the first ages of the world, is still receiving new developments from every great step in the history of the species.

6. It is impossible to give a complete exposition of this argument without an actual reference to the

prophecies themselves; and this we at present abstain from. But it can be conceived, that a prophecy, when first announced, may be so obscure, as to be unintelligible in many of its circumstances; and yet may so far explain itself by its accomplishment, as to carry along with it the most decisive evidence of its being a prophecy. And the argument may be so far strengthened by the number, and distance, and independence, of the different prophecies, all bearing an application to the same individual and the same history, as to leave no doubt on the mind of the observer, that the events in question were in the actual contemplation of those who uttered the prediction. If the terms of the prophecy were not comprehended, it at least takes off the suspicion of the event being brought about by the control or agency of men who were interested in the accomplishment. If the prophecies of the Old Testament are just invested in such a degree of obscurity, as is enough to disguise many of the leading circumstances from those who lived before the fulfilment,—while they derive from the event an explanation satisfying to all who live after it, then, we say, the argument for the divinity of the whole is stronger, than if no such obscurity had existed. In the history of the New Testament, we see a natural and consistent account of the delusion respecting the Messiah, in which this obscurity had left the Jewish people—of the strong prejudices, even of the first disciples—of the manner in which these prejudices were dissipated, only by the accomplishment—and of their final conviction in the import of these prophecies being at last so

strong, that it often forms their main argument for the divinity of that new religion which they were commissioned to publish to the world. Now, assuming, what we still persist in asserting, and ask to be tried upon, that an actual comparison of the prophecies in the Old Testament, with their alleged fulfilment in the New, will leave a conviction behind it, that there is a real correspondence betwixt them; we see, in the great events of the new dispensation, brought about by the blind instrumentality of prejudice and opposition, far more unambiguous characters of the finger of God, than if every thing had happened with the full concurrence and anticipation of the different actors in this history.

7. There is another essential part of the argument, which is much strengthened by this obscurity. It is necessary to fix the date of the prophecies, or to establish, at least, that the time of their publication was antecedent to the events to which they refer. Now, had these prophecies been delivered in terms so explicit, as to force the concurrence of the whole Jewish nation, the argument for their antiquity would not have come down in a form as satisfying, as that in which it is actually exhibited. The testimony of the Jews, to the date of their sacred writings, would have been refused as an interested testimony. Whereas, to evade the argument as it stands, we must admit a principle, which, in no question of ordinary criticism, would be suffered for a single moment to influence our understanding. We must conceive, that two parties, at the very time that they were influenced by the

strongest mutual hostility, combined to support a fabrication; that they have not violated this combination; that the numerous writers on both sides of the question have not suffered the slightest hint of this mysterious compact to escape them; and that, though the Jews are galled incessantly by the triumphant tone of the christian appeals to their own prophecies, they have never been tempted to let out a secret, which would have brought the argument of the Christians into disgrace, and shown the world, how falsehood and forgery mingled with their pretensions.

8. In the rivalry which, from the very commencement of our religion, has always obtained betwixt Jews and Christians; in the mutual animosities of christian sects; in the vast multiplication of copies of the Scriptures; in the distant and independent societies which were scattered over so many countries; we see the most satisfying pledges, both for the integrity of the Sacred Writings, and for the date which all parties agree in ascribing to them. We hear of the many securities which have been provided in the various forms of registrations, and duplicates, and depositaries; but neither the wisdom, nor the interest of men, ever provided more effectual checks against forgery and corruption, than we have in the instance before us. And the argument, in particular, for the antecedence of the prophecies to the events in the New Testament, is so well established by the concurrence of the two rival parties, that we do not see, how it is in the power of additional testimony to strengthen it.

9. But neither is it true, that the prophecies are delivered in terms so obscure, as to require a painful examination, before we can obtain a full perception of the argument. Those prophecies which relate to the fate of particular cities, such as Nineveh, and Tyre, and Babylon; those which relate to the issue of particular wars, in which the kings of Israel and Judah were engaged; and some of those which relate to the future history of the adjoining countries, are not so much veiled by symbolical language, as to elude the understanding, even of the most negligent observers. It is true, that in these instances, both the prophecy and the fulfilment appear to us in the light of a distant antiquity. They have accomplished their end. They kept alive the faith and worship of successive generations. They multiplied the evidences of the true religion; and account for a phenomenon in ancient history that is otherwise inexplicable, the existence and preservation of one solitary monument of pure theism in the midst of a corrupt and idolatrous world.

10. But to descend a little farther. We gather, from the state of opinions at the time of our Saviour, so many testimonies to the clearness of the old prophecies. The time and the place of our Saviour's appearance in the world, and the triumphant progress, if not the nature of his kingdom, were perfectly understood by the priests and chief men of Judea. We have it from the testimony of profane authors, that there was, at that time, a general expectation of a prince and a prophet all over the East. The destruction of Jerusalem was

another example of the fulfilment of a clear prophecy; and this, added to other predictions uttered by our Saviour, and which received their accomplishment in the first generation of the christian church, would have its use in sustaining the faith of the Disciples amidst the perplexities of that anxious and distressing period.

11. We can even come down to the present day, and point to the accomplishment of clear prophecies in the actual history of the world. The present state of Egypt, and the present state of the Jews, are the examples which we fix upon. The one is an actual fulfilment of a clear prophecy. The other is also an actual fulfilment, and forms in itself the likeliest preparation for another accomplishment that is yet to come. Nor do we conceive, that these clear and literal fulfilments exhaust the whole of the argument from prophecy. They only form one part of the argument; but a part so obvious and irresistible, as should invite every lover of truth to the examination of the remainder. They should secure such a degree of respect for the subject, as to engage the attention, and awaken even in the mind of the most rapid and superficial observer, a suspicion that there may be something in it. They should soften that contempt which repels so many from investigating the argument at all, or at all events, they render that contempt inexcusable.

12. The whole history of the Jews is calculated to allure the curiosity; and, had it not been leagued with the defence and illustration of our faith, would have drawn the attention of many a philosopher,

as the most singular exhibition of human nature that ever was recorded in the annals of the world. The most satisfying cause of this phenomenon is to be looked for in the history, which describes its origin and progress; and by denying the truth of that history, we abandon the only explanation which can be given of this wonderful people. It is quite in vain to talk of the immutability of Eastern habits, as exemplified in the nations of Asia. What other people ever survived the same annihilating processes? We do not talk of conquest, where the whole amount of the effect is in general, a change of dynasty or of government; but where the language, the habits, the denomination, and above all, the geographical position, still remain to keep up the identity of the people. But in the history of the Jews, we see a strong indestructible principle, which maintained them in a separate form of existence amid changes that no other nation ever survived. We confine ourselves to the overthrow of their nation in the first century of our epoch, and appeal to the disinterested testimonies of Tacitus and Josephus, if ever the cruelty of war devised a process of more terrible energy for the utter extirpation of a name and a remembrance from the world. They have been dispersed among all countries. They have no common tie of locality or government to keep them together. All the ordinary principles of assimilation, which make law, and religion, and manners, so much a matter of geography, are in their instance suspended. Even the smallest particles of this broken mass have resisted an affinity of almost universal operation,

and remained undiluted by the strong and overwhelming admixture of foreign ingredients. And, in exception to every thing which history has recorded of the revolutions of the species, we see in this wonderful race a vigorous principle of identity, which has remained in undiminished force for nearly two thousand years, and still pervades every shred and fragment of their widely scattered population. Now, if the infidel insist upon it, we shall not rest on this as an argument. We can afford to give it up; for, in the abundance of our resources, we feel independent of it. We shall say that it is enough, if it can reclaim him from his levity, and compel his attention to the other evidences which we have to offer him. All we ask of him is to allow, that the undeniable singularity which is before his eyes, gives him a sanction at least, to examine the other singularities to which we make pretension. If he go back to the past history of the Jews, he will see in their wars the same unexampled preservation of their name and their nation. He will see them surviving the process of an actual transportation into another country. In short, he will see them to be unlike all other people in what observation offers, and authentic history records of them; and the only concession that we demand of him, from all this, is, that their pretension to be unlike other people in their extraordinary revelations from heaven, is at least possible, and deserves to be inquired into.

13. It may not be out of place to expose a species of injustice, which has often been done to the christian argument. The defence of Christi-

anity consists of several distinct arguments, which have sometimes been multiplied beyond what is necessary, and even sometimes beyond what is tenable. In addition to the main evidence which lies in the testimony given to the miracles of the Gospel, there is the evidence of prophecy; there is the evidence of collateral testimony; there is the internal evidence. The argument under each of these heads is often made to undergo a farther subdivision; and it is not to be wondered at, that, in the multitude of observations, the defence of Christianity may often be made to rest upon ground, which, to say the least of it, is precarious or vulnerable. Now, the injustice which we complain of is, that when the friends of our religion are dislodged from some feeble outwork, raised by an unskilful officer in the cause, its enemies raise the cry of a decisive victory. But, for our own part, we could see her driven from all her defences, and surrender them, without a sigh, so long as the phalanx of her historical and experimental evidence remains impenetrable. Behind this unscaled barrier, we could entrench ourselves, and eye the light skirmishing before us with no other sentiment than of regret, that our friends should, by the ignorance of their misplaced zeal, have given our enemies the appearance of a triumph.

14. Whatever opinion may be held as to the two-fold interpretation of prophecy, though it were refuted by argument, and disgraced by ridicule, all that portion of evidence which lies in the numerous examples of literal and unambiguous fulfilment remains unaffected by it. Many there are, who

deny the inspiration of the Song of Solomon. But in what possible way does this affect the records of the evangelical history? Just as much as it affects the Lives of Plutarch, or the Annals of Tacitus. There are a thousand subjects on which infidels may idly push the triumph, and Christians be as idly galled by the severity, or even the truth of their observations. We point to the historical evidence for the New Testament, and ask them to dispose of it. It is there, that we call them to the onset; for there lies one great strength of the christian argument. It is true, that, in the evidence of prophecy, we see a rising barrier, which, in the progress of centuries, may receive from time to time a new accumulation to the materials which form it. In this way, the evidence of prophecy may come in time to surpass the evidence of miracles. The restoration of the Jews will be the fulfilment of a clear prophecy, and form a proud and animating period in the history of our religion. "Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness!"

15. One singularly enamoured of the study of Prophecy would find the topic unexhausted, even at the end of a life devoted to the intense prosecution of it. It were therefore well that with at least a few inquirers this were a selected and a favourite pursuit, and it is incumbent upon all to obtain a general acquaintance with the facts and principles of the subject. Horne, in his Introduction to the Scriptures, presents a good general outline of the study, and more especially of the authorship that

would introduce us more at large into the details of it. Altogether it is a very rich and interesting field of contemplation, insomuch that some are to be met with who, unwilling to abandon it for any other, persist in cleaving to it as the most delightful of their literary employments.

16. There are certain theological studies which, if we are exclusively given up to them, might leave us unfurnished in all that is most valuable and most vital among the truths of Christianity. A skilful emendator of doubtful texts and readings of Scripture, for example, might after all but penetrate the shell, without ever once entering upon the substance of divine knowledge. There are certain, too, of the outward credentials for the Gospel, which might be mastered and explored by one who remains in profoundest ignorance as well as unconcern about the contents of the Gospel. This is very possible in the study of the evidence from miracles; but it cannot well be with the evidence from prophecy—for this evidence we cannot in all its fulness overtake without extensively ranging through the subject-matter of Revelation, and so without coming into contact with all that is most important in Theology. In the Bible, doctrine and prophecy are so intermingled that, when in quest of the one, the other is unavoidably obtruded upon us. Instead of losing sight of the Saviour by this study, if rightly conducted, it will lead us to recognise Him in a thousand passages of the record where He had before escaped our observation. It connects and harmonizes the two dispensations —impressing on the Judaism of the Old, the evan-

gelical character of the New Testament; nor need we fear that, in this investigation, if but soundly prosecuted, we shall miss the great and essential principles of our faith,—seeing that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

17. We should therefore fearlessly urge upon all inquirers the application of a considerable portion of their time and strength to the study of prophecy. It will bring perhaps more immediately to view, more perhaps than most other theological studies, the evident tokens of a God in the construction of that wondrous scheme whose remoter parts are found so well to correspond. It identifies in the mind, the God of Revelation with the God of Nature and of History; and, apart altogether from the literary importance of the subject, we feel persuaded, that, if investigated in a right spirit of seriousness, it may be mightily instrumental to the establishment of a strong and practical sense of religion in the heart of the inquirer.

18. At the commencement of this study, the best thing that can be done, is first to read all the actual prophecies of Scripture, to which, in Scripture or in common history, we have also corresponding fulfilments. Let each prophecy and its fulfilment be read together. We have a list of passages in Horne, containing the predictions of the Bible, and over against them a list of passages either from the Bible or other books which are supposed to narrate the counterpart accomplishment. We do not know that the study of prophecy is usually begun in this way. We fear not. But the advantage of it is incalculable. We should not only

obtain a more correct and powerful impression of the evidence, as, receiving it at first hand; but we should become habituated to the prophetic style and manner, and then could not fail to perceive that it has certain characteristics by which it may be described, or by which it may be recognised. Like every other subject which has truth and consistency for its foundation, it will be found to have a habit of its own, and a nomenclature of its own. Before we read so much as one explanation of its peculiar and symbolic language from any author, it were well to be familiarized to this and all the other peculiarities by actual converse with the prophecies themselves. However unpractised, this is quite the right and the commanding outset for these investigations; and it would place us on high vantage-ground, not merely for understanding the expositions of theologians, but also for sitting in the exercise of an independent judgment over them. In the mere work of comparing each prophecy with its recorded fulfilment, and one prophecy with another, we should receive a decided taste for the subject, and a strong impulse to the further prosecution of it; and then, how much purer the taste, how much better directed must be the impulse, which is given by the *ipsissima verba* of Scripture, than if given by the plausibilities of some human speculation, by the fondness and the fascination of any theory. In short, it is better to enter on the analytic treatment of the subject, by reading this department of the Bible for ourselves, before we follow the synthetic treatment which any interpreter of the Bible might happen to have bestowed

upon it. A previous acquaintance with the prophetic diction, gathered from the clearer prophecies, would give us mighty advantage, when we enter upon the investigation of the obscurer prophecies. We should be put thereby in possession of a cipher, not for unlocking all the secrets; but certainly for guiding us a certain way among the arcana of a labyrinth that, to an unpractised eye, looks utterly hopeless and inextricable. It is thus that the anterior study of Daniel serves at least to alleviate, to a certain extent, that aspect of impalpable mysteriousness which otherwise sits on the Book of Revelation.

19. Thus prepared, we should be in the best possible circumstances for perusing the books recommended by Horne on the figurative and symbolic language of prophecy, of which it has been well said by Van Mildert, late bishop of Durham—"that it is almost a science in itself. None," says he, "can fully comprehend the depth, sublimity, and force of their writings, who are not thoroughly acquainted with the peculiar and appropriate imagery they were accustomed to use. This is the main key to many of the prophecies; and, without knowing how to apply it, the interpreter will often in vain essay to discover their hidden treasures." What makes it the more necessary to make a study of this is that the symbol is not always like the type founded upon resemblance—but, like sounds and written characters, may have a good deal in it of the merely conventional or arbitrary. Symbolical language is more a system of natural characters than ordinary language is

certainly; but the likeness between the sign and the thing signified is far from being so accurate as that between the type and the antitype—as, for example, when water, the effusion of which upon the church is prophesied of by Isaiah, is made to denote the Holy Spirit; and the Temple, the human body; and a beast, as in Daniel and the Book of Revelation, an empire; and briars, the wicked, or the enemies of God; and Bridegroom, our Saviour as the head of the mystical body; and candlestick, the Christian Church; and day, a year; and Dragon, an enemy who is invested with kingly power, hence, by pre-eminence, Satan; and heat, a persecution; and heaven, the political status of the rulers and grandees in society; and horn, the regal power; and Jerusalem, the city of the living God in paradise; and Jezebel, a seducer; and keys, the power of imprisonment or custody; and Sodom and Gomorrah, cities of apostasy and wickedness; and star, a potentate; and sun and moon, the civil and ecclesiastical state of Judea; and vine or vineyard, the Church of Israel; and woman, the body politic. In most of these instances, of which many more could be given, the natural resemblance is more or less obscured—so that, in the language of Dr. Hurd, they form representative marks rather than express pictures; and, instead of offering those complex and entire similarities which are held out to us in types, they are employed rather as characters approaching to the arbitrary, and suggesting, each of them, but one general idea to the mind.

20. We can understand a certain natural sus-

picion of something gratuitous and fanciful in all this. There is really no other way either of confirming or of refuting this imagination, but by making the trial. Were a cipher to the old hieroglyphics of Egypt put into our hand, we can conceive the abstract and previous explanation of it to be met with the utmost incredulity. But all this would speedily be dissipated, if we found, on the actual application, that we could draw a consistent meaning out of the various inscriptions which we met with—and so of the cipher to prophecy, should we be enabled thereby, not only to read each prediction in an intelligible way, but in that way to make out a harmony between them and their respective fulfilments. Thus fortified we should address ourselves with all the greater confidence to the task of unravelling the obscure and yet unaccomplished prophecies; and, on the other hand, it is undeniable that should these at length evolve into histories, accordant with the principles of an interpretation applicable to them all, light must at length break out of this apparent darkness and mystery; and thus, enveloped in yet unopened enigmas, an immense mass of evidence may still be awaiting us.

21. There is one use which may be made of the symbolical language of prophecy. It might be employed as an argument by some for the purpose of doing away the doctrine of its having a double sense or a two-fold accomplishment. Certain it is that this symbolic language does of itself give an air of exaggeration to the prophecy, even though it should have but one fulfilment; and so might lead

the mind to look upon something ulterior, and something higher than the historical event, which viewed in its literalities seems to fall short of the magnificent diction wherein the prophecy which foretold it is invested. The fall of Jerusalem preceded by earthquakes and commotions, accompanied by signs from heaven, the obscuration of the sun and moon, and the precipitation of stars from their place in the firmament, and marked by the coming of the Son of Man in power and great glory—even this single event, it may be argued exhausts the prophecy, when the reduction is made from the symbolic to the ordinary language. The only way of meeting this argument effectually is to invite an actual and detailed examination of the actual prophecies. And we shall make a good beginning by reading the prophecies which are instanced by Horne as prophecies of a double sense. We shall find it difficult to escape from the impression, first, of many anterior events in Scripture being typical of posterior ones; and so, secondly, when both the typical and antitypical event are predicted by one who lived prior to them both, of there being in that case a prophecy with a double sense. The most effectual method of deciding this controversy is, not by employing any generalities of illustration or argument, but simply by telling all the doubters or inquirers to come and see. We are quite aware that the doctrine of double prophecy is, in the first instance, often an offensive one to minds of strong rationality—shrewdly and suspiciously on their guard, against all the vagaries of wild imagination. Such a mind

we conceive to have been that of Samuel Horsley and accordingly, he set out in his prophetic studies, with a strong inclination or rather antipathy against a style of interpretation which, he conceived, would open the door to a caprice and a latitude that would be quite interminable. But he at length gave way to the evidence which met him on his path; and became one of the most powerful advocates for the doctrine of a double sense, not of course in all, but in many of the prophecies of Scripture. His four sermons on prophecy not only enlarge our conceptions of the whole scheme, but afford a substantial intellectual repast, distinguished as they are by all the characteristics of that independent and manly understanding which the author of them possessed. As well as Davison after him he was made clearly to perceive that the double fulfilment, instead of facilitating the verification of the prophecy, multiplied the chances against it, and so brought out a more unequivocal indication of the divine prescience and wisdom, both in the two-fold harmony of the prediction with the two events, and in the harmony of these events with each other.

22. But while we make this stand for the double meaning and application of certain of these prophecies, let us again repeat that we do not rest upon these the main evidence which prophecy contributes for the vindication of the faith in the controversy with infidels. There are prophecies free of all the ambiguity which either a double interpretation or a symbolical language may be conceived to attach to them—literal and direct announcements followed up at the interval of centuries, by plainest

possible history—prenunciations of the state of various people, as the Jews, and the Arabians, and the Egyptians, delivered thousands of years ago, and which down to the present moment, offer the most striking graphic delineation of these people as they actually are—picturesque representations of the fate of cities which are named, but that give with all the accuracy of a Flemish picture, the vivid realities of their present situation, the fishermen that dry their nets on the rocks and rubbish of Tyre, the doleful creatures that nestle in the ruins of Babylon and Nineveh—all these couched in the terms of a literal description: and even when the prophecy assumes its own characteristic language, and becomes symbolical or figurative, it still is invested in a medium of sufficient transparency for our perceiving the marked accordancy between the general strain of prophecy in the Book of Revelation and the general progress of history in the Book of Experience. Who, for example, can resist the impression that the actual structure of the great European commonwealth is prefigured, and that at the distance of twenty-five centuries, by the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image; or, in the sublime visions of the Apocalypse, by the ten horns surmounted with crowns which, transferred, as they are represented to have been, from the seven heads, mark in beautiful and impressive emblem the transference of power from imperial Rome to the separate monarchies that emerged into political being after its overthrow. These and such as these afford the strong points of the argument with infidelity; and it is not for the purpose of strengthening our defen-

sive armour against the enemies of the faith, that we call for attention either to the double prophecies or to the peculiarities of the prophetic style.

23. But though the study of these be of little use in the argument with infidels, it may be of the utmost use for guiding the deeper inquisition of Christians into the meaning of the unexplained or the unfulfilled prophecies. But from what has been said it must be obvious, that an immense preparation is necessary to warrant the adventurer who shall try to explore the secrets of futurity. The temerity of the unskilled novice is to be deprecated, who, seduced by the plausibility of some one conception of his own, would erect it into a principle of universal interpretation. There is an admirable maxim of Horsley upon this subject, which, whether well made out or not, from that passage on which he has bestowed a most original treatment, that "no prophecy is of private interpretation"—has in itself a great deal of soundness to recommend it. He tells us that no prophecy should be looked to singly, but that each should be regarded as the part of a mighty and comprehensive scheme—which scheme one would need to make the object of a wide and studious survey, ere he committed himself, unfurnished with the requisite lights, and the requisite charts or compass, to the ocean of unfulfilled prophecy. To lay an interdict on the search were to contravene the solemn words of Scripture itself—"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keepeth those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand." But the same authority which

warrants the attempt hath issued also a most impressive warning on the danger of adding our own rash imaginations to the realities of Scripture —"If any man shall add to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book"—a denunciation we conceive not merely against those who would annex to the book, words which are not in it, but who would graft confident interpretations thereupon, and so hold forth a substance and a meaning which are not in it. It is truly the duty of every christian student, earnestly but yet humbly and reverently to inquire into the sense of these mysterious communications—yet with a due regard to the methods of prophecy, and a due sense of the vast inferiority between the thoughts and the ways of man, and the thoughts and the ways of God.*

* We so perfectly accord with the just and admirable sentiments of the author of the Natural History of Enthusiasm in this matter, that we cannot refrain from indulging ourselves, and we are sure, gratifying our readers with a few extracts from his chapter on the Enthusiasm of Prophetical Interpretation.

"A confident and dogmatical interpretation of those prophecies that are supposed to be on the eve of fulfilment, has manifestly a tendency thus to bring forth the wonders of the unseen world, and to connect them in sensible contact with the familiar objects and events of the present state. And such interpretations may be held with so full and overwhelming a persuasion of their truth, that heaven and its splendours may seem to stand at the door of our very homes:—to-morrow, perhaps, the hastening crisis of the nations shall lift the veil which so long has hidden the brightness of the eternal throne from mortal eyes: —each turn of public affairs; a war—a truce—a conspiracy—a royal marriage—may be the immediate precursor of that new era, wherein it shall no longer be true, as heretofore, that 'the things eternal are unseen.'

"When an opinion—or we should rather say, a persuasion, of this imposing kind is entertained by a mind of more mobility than strength, and when it has acquired form, and consistency, and

24. One thing is undeniable, the inexpediency of bringing forward these doubtful explanations into the pulpit. And there is one baleful effect which

definiteness, by being long and incessantly the object of contemplation, it may easily gain exclusive possession of the mind; and a state of exclusive occupation of the thoughts by a single subject, if it be not real madness, differs little from it; for a man can hardly be called sane who is mastered by one set of ideas, and has lost the will or the power to break up the continuity of his musings.

"Whether or not this explanation be just, it is matter of fact that no species of enthusiasm has carried its victims nearer to the brink of insanity than that which originates in the interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy. It need not be asked whether there is not some capital error on the side of many who have given themselves to this study; for the indications of egregious delusion have been of a kind not to be mistaken. There must be present some lurking mischief when the study of any part of holy Scripture issues in extravagance of conduct, and in an offensive turgidness of language, and produces—not quietness and peace, but a wild and quaking looking for of impending wonders. There must be a fault of principle when the demeanour of Christians is such that those who occupy the place of the unlearned are excused when they say 'ye are mad.'

"That some peculiar danger haunts this region of biblical inquiry is established by a double proof; for not only have men of exorbitant imaginations and feeble judgments rushed towards it instinctively and with the eagerness of infatuation; but sometimes the soundest understandings have lost, in these inquiries, their wonted discretion. At several periods of church-history, and again in our own times, multitudes have drunk to intoxication of the phial of prophetic interpretation; and, amid imagined peals of the mystic thunder, have become deaf to the voice both of common sense and of duty. The piety of such persons—if piety it may be called has made them hunger and thirst, not for 'the bread and water of life,' but for the news of the political world. In such instances it may be confidently affirmed, previously to a hearing of the argument, that, even if the interpretation were true, it has been entangled with some knotted thread of egregious error.

"The proper remedy for this evil is not to be found in the timid or overbearing prohibitions of those who endeavour to prevent the mischief by interdicting inquiry; and who would make it a sin or a folly for a Christian to ask the meaning of certain portions of scripture. Cautions and restrictions of this nature are incompatible with the principles of Protestantism, as well as unnecessary, arrogant, and unavailing. If indeed man possessed any means of intrusion upon the mysteries of the upper

has resulted from these abstruser speculations. They have not only taken up the room which rightfully belongs to the invitations of the gospel

world, or upon the secrets of futurity, there might be room to reprehend the audacity of those who should attempt to know by force or by importunity of research what has not been revealed. But when the unseen and the future are, by the spontaneous grace of heaven, in part set open—when a message, which might have been withheld, has been sent to earth, encircled with a benediction like this—"Blessed are they that hear, and keep these words:" then it may most safely be concluded that whatever is not marked with the seal of prohibition, is open to scrutiny. In truth there is something incongruous in the notion of a *revelation* enveloped in restrictions. Be this as it may, it is certain that whoever would shut up the scriptures, in whole or in part, from his fellow disciples, or who affirms it to be unsafe or unwise to study such and such passages, is bound to show reasons of the most convincing kind for the exclusion. 'What God has joined, let not man put asunder:' But he has connected his blessing, comprehensively, with the study of his word. It may be left to the Romish church to employ that faulty argument of captious arrogance, which prohibits the use of whatever may be abused. Unless then it can be shown that a divine interdiction encloses the prophetic portions of scripture, it must be deemed an ill-judged and irreligious, though perhaps well intended usurpation, in any one who assumes to plant his little rod of obstruction across the highway of revelation."

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"The agitation which has recently taken place on the subject of prophecy, may perhaps, ere long, subside and the church may again acquiesce in its old sobrieties of opinion. And yet a different and better result of the existing controversy seems not altogether improbable; for when enthusiasm has raved itself into exhaustion, and has received from time the refutation of its precocious hopes; and when, on the other side, prosing mediocrity has uttered all its saws, and fallen back into its own slumber of contented ignorance, then the spirit of research and of legitimate curiosity, which no doubt has been diffused among not a few intelligent students of scripture, may bring on a calm, a learned, and a productive discussion of the many great questions that belong to the undeveloped destiny of man. And it may be believed that the issue of such discussions will take its place among the means that shall concur to usher in a brighter age of Christianity."

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"The study of those parts of scripture which relate to futurity,

and the calls to repentance; but they have given the feeling to a certain extent that all this plain and practical preaching may now be given up in despair, because of the approaching certainty of that awful and inevitable doom which now impends over an unbelieving world. In other words, some have well nigh given up the hope of any good from the ordinary means of praying, or of preaching, or of circulating the Bible, or of sending forth missionaries—because of the great revolution that is now at hand, and which is to cut short all, and to supersede all. It is thus that the incumbent precept for to-day, is to be held in abeyance by the pictured futurities which some near or distant morrow is expected to realize—and far the worst direction we apprehend which these speculations have taken, is, —that, instead of waiting for the Lord in the attitude which Himself has prescribed, that is, in doing the work which He plainly and peremptorily lays upon them, they wait in a sort of mystic expectancy, during which all duty is suspended, and their own precarious imaginations are made to overbear the most express injunctions of the New Testament.

25. In justice, however, to one at least of their general views, let us state our own suspicion of what we hold to be a prevalent opinion, and by which we have no doubt the great majority of

should therefore be undertaken with zeal, inspired by a reasonable hope of successful research; and at the same time with the modesty and resignation which must spring from a not unreasonable supposition—that all such researches may be fruitless. So long as this modesty is preserved—there will be no danger of enthusiastic excitements, whatever may be the opinions which we are led to entertain."

Christians is actuated. We cannot get the better of an impression, grounded on what we hold to be the general sense of Scripture, and which we think may be distinctly traced in many of its passages, that the next coming of the Saviour is not a coming to the final judgment on the day of the general resurrection. This we hold to be the faith of the great majority; and yet there is much in the Bible to discountenance it. In prophecy there is a distinct millennium foretold, nor do we see how this can be expunged from the future history of the divine administration; and this indefinite period of peace and prosperous Christianity upon earth, is to be ushered in, it would appear, not as the ultimate term of a progressive series, along the successive steps of which, one nation is to be converted after another—till in the triumphs of a universal faith, made out by the gradual advancement of light and knowledge, to the uttermost ends of the world, the earth is at length to be transformed into the fair habitation of piety and righteousness. We would speak with diffidence; but as far as we can read into the prophecies of the time that is before us, we feel as if there was to be the arrest of a sudden and unlooked for visitation to be laid on the ordinary processes of nature and history; and that the millennium is to be ushered in, in the midst of judgments, and desolations, and frightful convulsions, which will uproot the present fabric of society, and shake the framework of its machinery into pieces. It is still as much the part of missionaries to carry the gospel unto every people under heaven, as it was of the apostolic missionaries who went forth

over all the then known world, previous to the destruction of Jerusalem. But though in these days they preached it universally, they did not plant it universally; and in like manner, we can imagine now a general publication without a general conversion of the nations, and that, instead of a diffused and universal Christianity being anterior to the next coming of the Saviour, that coming may be in judgment and sore displeasure on the irreligion and apostasy of a world that had now prepared itself for the outpourings of an accumulated wrath, by its continued resistance to all the ordinary demonstrations. Instead of a diffused and universal Christianity being anterior to the next coming of the Saviour, that coming itself may be anterior to a diffused and universal Christianity—to the restoration of the Jews, and the consequent fulness of the Gentiles. We speak not of a personal coming: there was none such at the destruction of Jerusalem, though it seems at least as if the Son of Man was then said to come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. But certain it is that a coming is spoken of as yet in reserve, when, instead of being met by the glad acclamations of a christianized world, He will come like a thief in the night, and with sudden destruction as with a whirlwind—when, as in the days of Noah and Lot, He will abruptly terminate the festivities and the schemes, and the busy occupations of a secure and wholly secular generation—and, so far from coming down on a regenerated species, then waiting in joyful expectancy for their king, it is asked whether, when this descent, whatever it may be, is accom-

plished, "Verily shall the Son of Man find faith upon the earth?" We say this not in full confidence, or for the purpose of dogmatizing any, but for the purpose of exciting all to an inquiry of deepest interest; and we should not advise a perusal of the more recent interpreters of prophecy till Mede, and Chandler, and Newton, and Hurd, and Horsley, and Davison, have become familiar to them. Then may they address themselves to the lucubrations of Cunninghame, and Faber, and Irving, and M'Neile, and Bickersteth. The little work of the last mentioned author is written with so much caution, and is at the same time so pervaded by the unction of personal Christianity, that it may with all safety be made the subject of an immediate perusal.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Connexion between the Truth of a Miracle, and the Truth of the Doctrine in Support of which it is performed.

1. For man to affirm that nothing short of Omnipotence can suspend the laws of visible nature, would seem to presume a far more extended acquaintance with nature and with the universe than in fact belongs to him. For ourselves, we can perceive nothing like self-evidence in such an assertion. We cannot tell what be the orders of power and of intelligence between us and God. We do not know either the limits or the extent of

their agency in the affairs of this lower world. It appears to us a monstrous presumption to affirm, that no arch-angel, no secondary or intermediate being whatever, can perform a miracle. We in fact transgress the line of separation between the known and the unknown, when we make either a confident affirmation, or a confident denial upon this subject. It is one of those things which are placed on the *terra incognita* beyond us; and it would comport more with the soundness and modesty of true science, just to acknowledge that we cannot say. What do we know about the constitution of the universe, or the concatenations of universal being; and, though warranted to believe in a supreme and all-powerful God, is it for us to define the amount of permission or of delegated power He may have vested in the creatures who are beneath Him?

2. But at this rate, how shall we be sure of a miracle being the voucher of a messenger from God? For aught we know, it may proceed from the foul machination of a powerful but wicked spirit, bent on some infernal experiment of deceit and cruelty. That very Bible, which stands pillared on its own miraculous evidence, affirms the existence of such beings, and actuated too by a mischievous policy, the object of which is to inthrall and destroy our species. Nay we read there of lying spirits; of wonders by enchantment, which, according to the literal description of them, are to all intents and purposes miracles; of possessions by spirits of superior force and intelligence, insomuch that they imparted both a preternatural knowledge, and a

preternatural strength to those whom they occupied. Now there is a perplexity here which requires much thought and argument to unravel. It certainly tends to obscure the connexion between the truth of a miracle, and the truth of the doctrine which is sanctioned by it. It is on the adjustment of this question that the English writers on miracles have expended, we think, the most of their strength; and, while in Scotland the great labour has been to dissipate the sophistries of Hume and so to vindicate the christian miracles as sufficiently ascertained facts—in the sister kingdom it has been, admitting them as facts, to vindicate them as real credentials from the God of heaven, and so as competent vouchers for that system of religion wherewith they are associated.

3. We can be at no loss to perceive what the tenets are which in this walk of theological speculation the controvertists on either side must, for the sake of consistency, make to stand or to fall together. They, on the one hand, who affirm that the bare fact of a miracle is in itself the instant and decisive token of an immediate forth-putting by the hand of God, must explain away the feats of the Egyptian magicians in the days of Moses; must explain away the demoniacal possessions of the New Testament; must explain away certain precepts and narratives of the Old, as a certain passage for example in the history of Saul, and a precept too which recognises false miracles by the hand of false prophets. Now all this has been attempted. The divinations before king Pharaoh by the wise men of his court have been resolved

into a successful legerdemain; the ejection of evil spirits by our Saviour has been resolved into the cure of certain diseases; the preternatural appearances and doings of wicked angels, however simply and literally recorded, have been resolved into dreams, or, like the history of the fall, into mere figurative description—and all for the purpose of harmonizing those various passages with their own theory, that a miracle can never happen without God being immediately in it; and that, therefore, when associated with the promulgation of a doctrine, his faithfulness is staked to the truth of it, when associated with the utterance of a threat or a promise, his power is staked to the fulfilment of it.

4. All this would tend no doubt to simplify the evidences of Christianity, and to supersede a question in the adjustment of which there might be some difficulty. It would follow that the bare fact of a miracle must at once accredit a revelation; and that for the purpose of confirming the evidence, all further inquiry is foreclosed, because altogether unnecessary. Yet one cannot help the question, what ought to be the effect, if in such a revelation, there did occur what one knew to be a historical, or what he irresistibly believed to be a mathematical falsity?—or what, if possible, would be more startling still, if it proclaimed a code of morality the reverse of all which conscience now holds to be sacred, of all which man is at present led by his most urgent sense of obligation to revere? Were this a mere hypothetical question, we might spare ourselves the pains of laying a difficulty conjured up by our own imagination. But Scrip-

ture itself gives countenance to the speculation; for, so far from dismissing the question as unworthy of all consideration, it is a question which itself has entertained, and to which it has deigned a reply. And the principle of that reply which silenced the old adversaries will still be of avail to silence the present adversaries of the faith. Of itself perhaps it may be a subordinate question; yet sound and important principle may be concerned in the solution of it—and, however little the practical necessity may be for any deliverance on the subject, still it is precisely that subject the right management of which might shed an illustration over the *rationale* of the Christian evidences.

5. In entering then on as succinct an exposition of this matter as possible, the very first remark which occurs to us is, that it does appear *ultra vires* on the part of man, to affirm of every miracle that because a miracle, it must proceed from the immediate finger or fiat of God. Is it in the spirit, we ask, either of Butler or Bacon, to make this confident affirmation? What is it that invests us with the mighty intelligence of knowing either the extent or the limit of those faculties which belong to the powers and the principalities and the higher orders of being that ascend, in upward gradation, between us and God? Does either the experience of our little day, but a moment on the high scale of eternity; or the observation of our narrow sphere, but an atom in the peopled immensity of worlds that are around us,—Do these entitle us to pronounce on the movements that take place in a universal economy of things, or to say how the

parts are affected and how they are implicated with each other? All that we have ever been led to regard as sound philosophy is utterly at antipodes with such a presumption as this. It teaches to value the information of the senses, and to value the solid informations of history. This is the philosophy of facts, and has no fellowship with that mere notional philosophy which has nothing but gratuitous imaginations to rest upon. It is of the latter and not of the former philosophy, that, when a miracle is evolved upon the platform of our visible world, we should pronounce on the operation behind the curtain which gave birth to it; or with confidence tell whether it was done by an immediate mandate from God, or by the spontaneous act of some subordinate but lofty creature stationed somewhere along that vast interval which separates man from the Deity. It is a matter altogether beyond our sphere, and therefore, to every apprehension of ours, it would comport better with the modesty of true science, to say in the first instance that God must have the power of making invasion on the laws of visible nature; but to say also, in the second instance, that, for aught we know, God may have permitted the exercise of a like power to the angels or the archangels who are beneath him.

6. But there is another presumption no less revolting to our taste, in the advocates of that system to which we now refer. Why all this tampering with the plain and obvious literalities of Scripture? How is it possible without giving up the authority of the record, to reduce these demoniacal possessions to diseases? On this subject

we should value the impression, the unsophisticated impression of a plain and simple cottager, before the opinion of all the nosologists; nor can the pompous nomenclature of all their demonstrations, ever reconcile us to such a glaring violation, as some have attempted to practise on a narrative which tells us of the spirits that held converse with the Saviour; that supplicated His forbearance; that, on their part told how they knew Him, and, on His part, were charged to be silent; and that, when displaced from their old receptacles by the word of His power, entered by permission into other receptacles where they made demonstration both of the power and malignity which belonged to them. These are mysteries no doubt—as every thing is which belongs in part to the seen, and in part to the unseen world. But they have also come down to us in the light of palpable facts, grounded on sensible and historical evidence. And to refuse a fact thus authenticated, because of the unexplained or perhaps inexplicable mysteriousness involved in it, appears very clearly to ourselves a transgression both of sound philosophy and of sound faith.

7. The question then is still unresolved. If for aught we know an evil spirit may effect a miracle —how comes a miracle, and in what circumstances, to be the token of a revelation from God? This question may be treated under three distinct suppositions, which, if satisfactorily disposed of, would exhaust the whole argument.

8. First, there are imaginable circumstances in which a miracle would carry no such indication along with it. If staked, for example, to a

professed revelation which canonized cruelty and deceit and licentiousness as so many virtues, or which proclaimed as truths that which we certainly knew to be historical or mathematical falsehoods; this would clearly devolve the whole credit of the miracle on some wicked but powerful spirit who either plotted some infernal mischief to our species, or delighted in practising a mockery on the hopes and the principles of mankind.

9. But, secondly, if, on the other hand, the revelation in question was characterized throughout by a pure and unchanging morality; if from the beginning to the end of it there was one reigning, and sustained, and consistent impression of sacredness; if there sat an obvious truth and dignity upon all its pages; above every thing, if such were its doctrine, and such its precepts, that a belief in the one, and a steadfast observation of the other, exalted the character of man, and in proportion as they prevailed, made of mankind a happy, and healthful society—we could not but recognise both the goodness and honesty of the living power that achieved these miracles; and, if in the bosom of the revelation that power was declared to be God, we could not but accept of all the moral characteristics wherewith the book was so obviously pervaded, as guarantees for the truth of its own information —that it came from God, and that it was God whose will and whose wisdom had inspired it.

10. But, thirdly, there is a middle supposition between these two extreme ones. In our treatment of both the first suppositions, we evidently go on the presumption that God is righteous. Ere

we address ourselves to the task of examining either the one or the other professed revelation that we have just been imagining, we are preoccupied with the sense of God, as a God of equity and truth; and on this principle our decision, in fact, is suspended. We cannot on the one hand defer to the claims of a professed revelation, even though offered on the sanction of miracles, to have God for its author, if malignity and falsehood be graven upon its pages, and why?—because all our preconceptions of the Deity are on the side of His benignity and His faithfulness. We on the other hand could most readily surrender to it our faith and our obedience, if, after having witnessed or been convinced of its miracles, we saw that through all its passages, it was instinct with the purest morality, and why?—because, if the discordancy between its characteristics, and our previous notions of the character of God, led us to reject the first, even in spite of the miracles that accompanied it—so the accordancy between its characteristics and these previous notions of the divine character, lifts as it were the burden of this deduction off from the miracles, and leaves to them all that force and authority which properly belong to them. But by our present, or third supposition, a revelation might be imagined which offered to our notice no moral characteristics whatever; which touched not at all on an ethical subject or principle of any kind; which confined itself to the bare announcement, we shall suppose, of facts relative to the existence of things that lay without the sphere of our own previous observation or knowledge—but withal

having miracles to which it could appeal as the vouchers for its authenticity. Would miracles alone, it might be asked, having neither an evil morality in their message to overset their authority, nor a good morality to confirm it—would these alone substantiate the claims of a professed revelation? We hold that they would, but still because of the presumptions with which we are occupied in regard to the truth and benevolence of the Deity—believing as we do, in the absence of every indication that marked the agency of a wicked spirit in the offered communication, that He would not lend Himself either by permission to others, or by the direct exercise of His own power to the deception of His creatures. On each of the three suppositions then, there is a prior natural religion which mingles the influence of its presumptions in the matter, and so modifies the resulting conclusion whatever that may be. It is on the strength of this natural religion, and at the instigation of its principles, that we would reject a professed revelation charged either with obvious immorality or falsehood, even though in the face of undoubted miracles. It is on the strength also of this natural religion, that when instead of being disgraced with aught so unseemly as this, the venerable signatures of truth and holiness are throughout conspicuous, that we defer to the miraculous evidence, and hold it all the stronger that the morality and the miracles go hand in hand. But even as we have said, though neither a good, nor a bad morality stood associated with the message, still on the strength of natural religion, would we defer to the authority

of the miracles alone. If but simply relieved from the presence of aught that might indicate the agency of an evil though powerful spirit, and though it gave no indication of a moral character in itself—resting on the external voucher of its miracles alone—we should hold it a sufficient and a satisfying voucher of its having proceeded from that good and great Spirit who presides over the universe, and has the absolute command of all its energies. And still it is a previous natural religion that would guide us to the conclusion. It is in virtue of its propositions that we cannot think of a message thus attested, and having in itself no marks of deceit or turpitude by which to betray its unworthy origin,—we cannot think of such a message ushered in by miracles, or having miracles in its train, proceeding from any other than the Lord of nature: and more especially if it be from Him that it professes to have come. This is the natural conclusion; and, if there be nought to thwart or overbear it in the substance or circumstances of the communication, then on the simple removal of this disturbing force miracles are restored to the proper and legitimate effect which belongs to them.

11. We are aware that in this view of the matter a previous natural religion would seem to be indispensable. Whereas in the other view of it, the whole credit and authority that belong to the christian religion would have their primary fountain-head in the proper and peculiar evidences of revelation. Miracles, simply as such, and without regard to adjuncts at all, were enough in all conceivable circumstances, to authenticate any

professed communication from God to the world. The historical evidence for these miraculous facts were enough of themselves to constitute a simple but solid foundation on which to rest the whole superstructure of our creed. We confess our partiality, in other days, to what we held as a beautiful and consistent exemplification of the question between us and infidels. There is nothing however which has contributed more to modify our views upon this subject than the very question whereof we now treat. Instead of holding all religion as suspended on the miraculous evidence, we see this evidence itself standing at the bar of an anterior principle, and there waiting for its authentication. There is a previous natural religion on whose aid we call for the determination of this matter. It is an authority that we at one time should have utterly disregarded and contemned; but now hold it in higher reverence, since, reflecting on the supremacy of conscience within us, we deem this to be the token of an ascendant principle of morality and truth in the universe around us.

12. Now the charge which has been preferred against those who would require the doctrine to be such as neither to contravene any known truth, nor any obvious and universal principle of morality, is as follows. They say that it is first proving the miracle to have come from God by the doctrine, and then the doctrine to have come from Him by the miracle. But, the argument is altogether free of any such vicious circulation. Let the doctrine have immorality or obvious falsehood attached to it, and then it is insusceptible of being proved by

miraculous evidence to have come from God. We require the immorality and the falsehood to be removed from the doctrine—not to prove it, but to give it the susceptibility of being proved. The mere absence of any contradiction to morality or known truth will not itself prove the doctrine; but it will make the doctrine capable of being proved. It clears the way for the effect of the proper evidence. Now that proper evidence is the miracle—an evidence that could not have overcome the barrier either of known truth or of palpable immorality, but when this barrier is done away, works its full effect in favour of the doctrine at issue. The removal of a barrier is not tantamount to the rendering of a proof. It only affords room for the proof. There is no vicious circulation here. Though a miracle can demonstrate nothing in opposition to the evidence of the external senses, or even to the evidence of the moral sense that is within—yet, when all hostility from these quarters is displaced, a miracle, thus freed from the adverse or the disturbing force that would else have neutralized it, may in truth be the most effective of all demonstrations.

13. Now, to descend from the general or abstract form of the argument, let us inquire for a moment how it actually is with Christianity. It is already well known how it has been vindicated by Butler from the charge of certain immoralities wherewith it has been represented as bound up, because in the Old Testament, the children of Israel are said to have had the sanction of the Divinity for borrowing from the Egyptians what they never did repay,

and for the total extermination of a people of whose land they took violent possession.* Let us accept of this vindication, and attend for the time, to nothing positive on the side of Christianity, because

* "It is the province of reason to judge of the morality of the Scripture"—"whether it contains things plainly contradictory to wisdom, justice or goodness; to what the light of nature teaches us of God. And I know nothing of this sort objected against Scripture, excepting such objections as are formed upon suppositions, which would equally conclude, that the constitution of nature is contradictory to wisdom, justice or goodness; which most certainly it is not. Indeed there are some particular precepts in Scripture, given to particular persons, requiring actions, which would be immoral and vicious, were it not for such precepts. But it is easy to see, that all these are of such a kind, as that the precept changes the whole nature of the case, and of the action; and both constitutes, and shows that not to be unjust or immoral which, prior to the precept, must have appeared and really have been so; which may well be, since none of these precepts are contrary to immutable morality. If it were commanded to cultivate the principles, and act from the spirit of treachery, ingratitude, cruelty; the command would not alter the nature of the case or of the action, in any of these instances. But it is quite otherwise in precepts, which require only the doing an external action; for instance, taking away the property or life of any. For men have no right to either life or property, but what arises solely from the grant of God: When this grant is revoked, they cease to have any right at all, in either. And when this revocation is made known, as surely it is possible it may be, it must cease to be unjust to deprive them of either. And though a course of external acts, which without command would be immoral, must make an immoral habit; yet a few detached commands have no such natural tendency. I thought proper to say thus much of the few Scripture precepts, which require, not vicious actions, but actions which would have been vicious had it not been for such precepts; because they are sometimes weakly urged as immoral, and great weight is laid upon objections drawn from them. But to me there seems no difficulty at all in these precepts, but what arises from their being offences: *i. e.*, from their being liable to be perverted, as indeed they are by wicked designing men, to serve the most horrid purposes; and perhaps, to mislead the weak and enthusiastic. And objections from this head, are not objections against revelation; but against the whole notion of religion, as a trial; and against the general constitution of nature."—*Butler's Analogy*, part ii. chap. iii.

of the transcendantly pure and perfect morality which radiates from all its pages. Then this would place Christianity on the level of our middle or third supposition, under which we conceived, in the case of some professed revelation—that, touching not on morality at all, there was neither a good morality, that could be alleged in its favour, nor an evil that could be alleged to its prejudice or discredit. We have already stated how a miracle performed on this wholly neutral ground, would exhibit a strongly affirmative argument in behalf of all which its performer claimed; and that any doctrine or information of his thus sanctioned, appealing as it does to a miracle as the voucher of its divine origin, might with all safety be accepted as indeed the very doctrine or information which God Himself has been pleased to set before us. Christianity, in spite of every exception which has been taken against it, stands clearly at least as high as this—that is, in a condition to be proved by miracles, even though the positive excellence of its ethical system had not placed it on a far surer and higher vantage-ground.

14. For what is the real state of the case in regard to our religion—breathing throughout a morality, which, if in universal practice among men, would turn the earth we live in to a paradise—breaking forth through the mists of surrounding illiberality and prejudice with a lustre and an expansion and a purity, in broadest possible contrast with the conceptions and habitudes of the age—instead of thwarting the miraculous evidence by any painful dissonancy between its spirit and what we hold

to be the spirit and character of God, superadding in fact the evidence of one sort of miracle to another, so that we do not wonder more at the men for the mighty works which they did, than for the noble and elevated system both of social and divine morality which they inculcated. There may be some difficulty in the speculative adjustment of this question; but in the specific case of Christianity, there is no practical difficulty at all. There is in fact no adjustment called for. The miracles and the morals of the gospel, instead of conflicting are conspiring forces, and stand side by side as harmonious witnesses of its having sprung from that mighty and unseen Being who unites in His nature the highest power with the highest goodness.

15. It has long struck us that there is a great accordancy between this question, and one that has given rise to no small perplexity and difference of opinion in moral science. It is well known that there are two different systems on the origin of virtue—one in which it is represented as having a native and independent rightness in itself, independent of all legislation; and another in which the will of God is represented as the primary fountain-head of all moral obligation. Now, it is conceivable that He might have put forth His authority so, as to have enjoined that which is morally evil. And thus a question might have arisen, not whether it was our interest, for that must be our interest which recommends us to favour and good-will from the Supreme Power of the universe—but whether it was our duty to obey God when with the voice of a master, and all the sanctions of a legal

authority, He commands that which morally is wrong. It is enough to originate the question, that God's legal right to command, and the rightness of that which he hath commanded are separable in idea; but surely we might save ourselves all the embarrassment and fatigue of such a question, if they are never separated in fact. It is a question which He hath never laid us under the practical necessity of resolving. The unfailing consistency that obtains under His government between the legal right and the moral rectitude, may well excuse us from all the pains and perplexities of an argument that is merely speculative: and we have nothing for it but to rejoice, that in the high and heavenly administration under which we sit, supreme power and supreme rectitude are at one; that He who is throned in irreversible judgment is also in justice unerring and inflexible; that with one and the same Being are conjoined the legal right to command, and that nature of perfect virtue which ensures a perfect rightness to all the commandments; and therefore, instead of puzzling and pronouncing upon our own arbitrary imaginations, let us never cease to admire the actual economy which hath been instituted over us, and that we can say of Him who hath ordained it, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right."

16. If it be our duty to obey God, it is also our duty to believe in Him. The supposition might be put that He affirmed what we held to be mathematically untrue; that He uttered a proposition which we irresistibly, and by the constitution of our understanding were led to regard as

false; and so the question might again be agitated, whether in this case it were incumbent upon us to resign our convictions to the authority of His saying. It is surely enough to cut short this perplexity, that God cannot lie, and that we should not waste our intellect on the impossibilities of an airy and hypothetical region. Now what is true of this second puzzle, is equally true of the first one. He might be conceived to enjoin by authority that which all men by the constitution of their moral nature agreed in regarding as a crime; and so casuistry be put upon her shifts to resolve an entanglement of her own making. But it were altogether endless to unriddle all these self-created difficulties; and therefore, as the Psalmist gave thanks at the remembrance of the holiness of God, so ought we to be thankful that the law written in the heart harmonizes with the law written in the book of an express revelation; that the lessons of the vicegerent within so correspond to the lessons of every inspired visitant from the upper sanctuary; that to the voice from above there is an echo in the hearts and consciences of the men who are below; and that the moral judgment which springeth up from human bosoms upon earth reflects so accurately the righteousness that looketh down upon them from heaven.

17. "The law of the Lord is perfect," "the statutes of the Lord are right," "the commandment of the Lord is pure," "the judgments of the Lord are altogether true and righteous,"—these passages not only announce to us the prerogative of God as a lawgiver; but they announce to us the pure and

righteous character of the enactments which proceed from Him. They tell us not only that He has the right of judgment; but, which is a distinct thing, they tell us that His judgments are right. They not only pronounce Him to have legally the right of commanding, but they pronounce of what He hath commanded, that it is right morally; and often, in Scripture, instead of standing upon His prerogative as the argument upon which He might exact our obedience, He appeals to the goodness or the rectitude of His law as the argument upon which He might persuade us to obedience. "Children," says the Apostle, "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right,"—not then on the naked plea of authority, not because it is for Him to be the absolute sovereign and for us to yield a passive and unquestioning obedience; but also because, upon the moral cognizance that we ourselves take of the precept, we can discern the rightness of it.

18. It is well that God's right to command, and the rightness of God's commandments are each of them so perfect in itself; and both of them so thoroughly adjusted the one to the other. The opposite state of things might be imagined, though, fortunately for us and for the universe of which we make a part, it has not been realized. Still one could figure a being who sat upon a throne of supremacy, and with that right of property in all things, which the act of their creation and the power of again sweeping them into the nonentity from which they were summoned, are supposed to confer—a being who had indued us with just moral susceptibilities, yet with a tyrant's caprice, thwarted

every sense that he himself had given of the distinction between good and evil, by setting up a law of revelation that was at variance with the law of the heart—a being who utterly reversed the characteristics of our own benign and venerable Deity, and bade us do the iniquity which he himself did love, and trample on the righteousness which he himself hated and despised—all this might certainly be imagined, a wild insurrectionary violence between the principles of virtue that he had put within, and the irreconcilable precepts that with authority and menace he had suspended over us; the generous and high-minded revolt of all our better feelings, which rose to indignant mutiny against the base and worthless and arbitrary dictates of him, whose only claim to our obedience was that in his hands there lay the irresistible strength which could either agonize or could destroy. In these circumstances there is room for the question, if such a monarch, even though divine and omnipotent, had the right to command, or if it would be right in his subjects to obey; and such might be the discrepancy between these two elements of the legal and the moral right, that each might neutralize the other, and the sound that fell on the mental ear be as distinct as were the discord of two rival and conflicting voices. We therefore repeat it as a theme of high gratulation to the creatures of our existing universe, that these elements are at one; that the testimonies which have come down to us from heaven's sanctuary, harmonize with the testimonies that issue from the recesses of the human conscience; that the enactments which go forth from the seat of jurisdiction

occupied by the actual and the reigning power, all bear upon them the high impress of principle; and that we are not only able to say of God, that He is rightfully the judge of the whole earth, because to Him belong the earth and the fulness thereof, but we are further able to say that the Judge of all the earth will do right.

19. Now under another government this state of things might be reversed. The thing can at least be imagined by us—a reigning power all whose moral characteristics were in direct opposition to those of our all-perfect and presiding Deity. He could have given us the moral perceptions that we now have; and, in most painful and perplexing variance with the tendencies of our nature, he could have utterly traversed them by the final issues of his administration. In the hands of such a ruler and such a proprietor, the good and the bad might have changed destinies, and a law been instituted, all whose sanctions were on the side of vice, and arrayed against virtue in the world. Then with the principles that we now have, our approbation would still have been to what is morally right, while our obligation as far as the authority of the divine law was concerned would have been to what is morally wrong. The one would have run counter to the other. They would have drawn the perplexed and agitated spirit in opposite directions. On one and the same action, there would descend the praises of the righteous and the penalties of an unrighteous God; and in very proportion to the force and the terror of these penalties would there be a louder testimony to the resolute and the high-

minded integrity of him who braved them. *Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum,* is the sublime of moral heroism; and it would raise this noble characteristic to the uttermost degree of its enhancement that even when thunder from heaven's throne was brought to overpower the determinations of rectitude, it was found to be invincible.

20. On this subject we would further refer the inquirer to Le Bas on Miracles—a work of great strength and originality; and altogether of a superior character, both in point of substance and of expression. Like Penrose of whom he is the reviewer, he addresses himself chiefly to the question of the ligament between the fact of a miracle, and the truth of the doctrine for which it is the voucher—or whether a miracle is in all cases the seal of an attestation from God.

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